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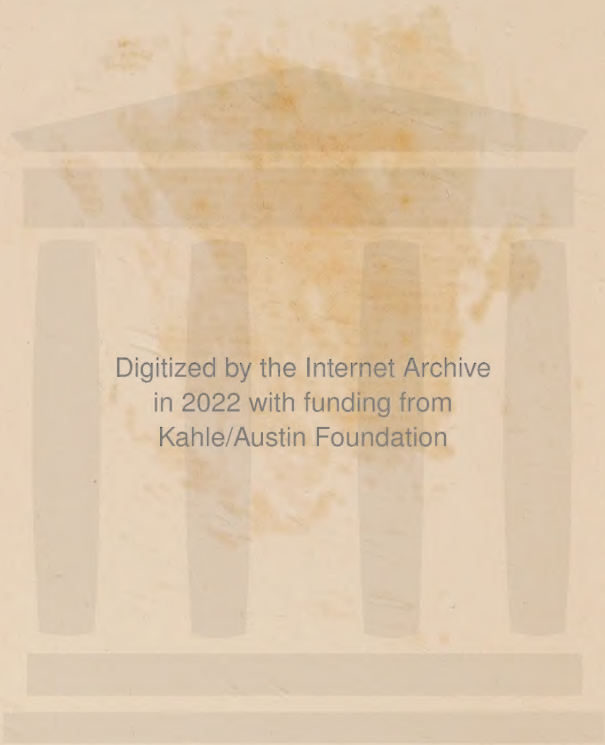
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de Echanla

SELECTED LETTERS OF ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL

Nihil Obstat.

F. THOMAS BERGH, O.S.B.,
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 6 *Novembris*, 1917.

ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL.

(*Foundress of the Order of the Visitation.*)

SELECTED LETTERS OF SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL

TRANSLATED BY

THE SISTERS OF THE VISITATION

HARROW

WITH A PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE

ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

P. J. KENEDY & SONS

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1918

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PREFACE

We are all apt so to idealise the Saints whom we love to study and honour, and strive to imitate, that we are in danger of forgetting that they possessed a human nature like our own, subject to many trials, weaknesses and frailties. They had to struggle as we have to struggle. The only difference is that their constancy and perseverance were greater far than ours.

Biographers are often responsible for the false tendency to which we allude. They like to give us the finished portrait of the Saints, and only too often they omit in great part the details of the long and weary toil that went to make the picture which they delight to paint.

In the case of some of the Saints we are able to come nearer to the reality by reading the letters which have been preserved, in which in their own handwriting they have set down, without thought of those who in later days might read their words, the details of their daily life and struggle. Thus in

the few selected Letters of the holy foundress of the Visitation which are now being published in an English translation we get glimpses of her real character and spiritual growth which may be more helpful to us than many pages of formal biography. In one place she excuses the brevity of a letter because she is "feeling the cold to-day and pressed for time." In another she tells a Sister, "do everything to get well, for it is only your nerves." Nerves are evidently not a new malady nor a lately devised excuse. She knew the weariness of delay: "still no news from Rome. . . . I think His Grace the Archbishop would be glad to help us. . . . Beg him, I beseech you, to push on the matter."

Haste and weather had their effect on her as on us: "I write in such haste that I forget half of what I want to say. . . . We will make a chalice veil for you, but not until the very hot weather is over, for one cannot work properly while it lasts."

What mother, especially in these days of sorrow and anxiety, can read unmoved the Saint's own words as she speaks of her daughter's death, and of her fears about her son. "I am almost in despair . . . so miserable am I about it that I do not know which way to turn, if not to the Providence of God, there to bury my longings, confiding to His hands not only the honour but even the salvation of this already

half lost child. Oh! the incomparable anguish of this affliction. No other grief can come near to it."

And then we feel her mingled grief and joy when at last she learnt that this, her only son, had given up his life, fighting for his King, after a humble and fervent reception of the Sacraments.

Thus in the midst of the daily small worries of life, and of the great sorrows that at one time or other fall to the lot of all, we see a brave and generous soul, with human gifts and qualities like to our own, treading her appointed path to God.

No one can read her words without carrying therefrom fresh courage for his life, and a new determination to battle steadfastly to the end.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.

FEAST OF ST. JANE FRANCES
DE CHANTAL,
August 21st, 1917.

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

THE letters here translated are, with a few mentioned exceptions, selected from "Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres," "First edition entirely conformable to the original manuscripts published under the supervision of the religious of the Visitation of Holy Mary at Annecy, by E. Plon and Co., rue Garanciere 10, Paris, 1877."

The rendering cannot be looked upon as entirely literal, but the translators have kept as closely to the original as was consistent with an easy rendering in modern English.

The circular letter to the Sisters of the Visitation (page 152) is a remarkable document worthy of the reader's special attention, as are also the letters to "Dom John of St. Francis" on St. Francis de Sales, and the subtle manifestation of St. Jane Frances' own state of soul in her letter to "A great Servant of God."

It has been thought better to leave the super-

scription heading all the Saint's letters, "Vive Jésus" (Let Jesus reign), as in the original, and untranslated.

The title of "Sister Deposed" given to the immediate predecessor in office of the actual Superior is peculiar to the Visitation Order.

There are, as will be seen, a few slight omissions, but only when the matter was of no interest or importance.

The Saint, as the reader will observe, does not keep to any fixed rule in regard to capital letters.

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JUDGMENT OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER DE CHANTAL

" My brother de Thorens," said St. Francis to one of his friends, " travelled last month into Burgundy to fetch his little wife, and brought back with her a mother-in-law whom neither he is worthy of having nor I of serving. God has given her to me. She has come to be my daughter in order that I may teach her to die to the world and to live to Jesus Christ. Urged by God's design over her she has left all, and has provided for all with a strength and prudence not common to her sex, such that in her every action the good will find wherewith to praise her and the wicked will not know in what to blame her."

In a letter the holy Bishop expresses himself as follows: " The Queen Bee of our new hive, because she is so eager in the pursuit of virtue, is much tormented with sickness, yet she finds no remedy to her liking save in the observance of her Rule. I have never seen such singleness of intention, such submission to authority, such detachment from all things, such acceptance of the will of God, such

fervour in prayer as this good Mother shows. For my part I believe that God will make her like unto St. Paula, St. Angela, St. Catherine of Genoa, and the other holy widows." Writing elsewhere to one of his relations he says: " I feel unutterable consolation in seeing the moderation of our dear Mother in regard to all the obstacles that come in her way and her total indifference to the things of earth. In all truth I may say that, proportionately to the graces received, a soul could not arrive at higher perfection. I regard her as an honour to her sex, one who with the science of the Saints leads a most holy, hidden life concealed by an ordinary exterior, who does nothing out of the common and yet is irreproachable in all things."

Once again, writing to a Bishop in answer to a letter about Mother de Chantal, St. Francis says: " I cannot speak but with respect of this most holy soul which combines profound humility with a very broad and very capable mind. She is simple and sincere as a child, of a lofty and solid judgement. A great soul with a courage for holy undertakings beyond that of her sex. Indeed, I never read the description of the valiant woman of Solomon without thinking of Mother de Chantal. I write all this to you in confidence, for this truly humble soul would be greatly distressed if she knew that I had said so much in her praise."

SELECTED LETTERS OF ST. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL

I.

To St. Francis de Sales.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1611.

How soon may I hope for the happy day when I shall irrevocably offer myself to my God ? He has so filled me with the thought of being entirely His, and it has come home to me in such a wonderful and powerful manner, that, were my emotion to last as it now is, I could not live under its intensity. Never have I had such a burning love and desire for the evangelical life and for the great perfection to which God calls me. What I feel about it is quite impossible to put into words. But, alas ! my resolve to be very faithful to the greatness of the love of this divine Saviour is balanced by the feeling of my incapacity to correspond with it. Oh, how painful to love is this barrier of powerlessness ! But why do I speak thus ? By doing so I degrade, it seems to me, the gift of God which urges me to live in perfect poverty, in humble obedience, and in spotless purity.

II.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1612.

My Lord and my own Father, I pray God to fill your soul with His choicest blessings, with Himself, and above all with the most pure love of Jesus. Now, for fear others may alarm you, I am telling you myself that this morning I was taken very ill. After dinner I had a shivering fit and collapsed completely for a time, but now, thank God, I feel quite well again; so do not let this trouble you, for the love of God, that God Whom my soul loves, adores, and desires to serve with the utmost singleness of heart and with perfect purity. Obtain for me, my Father, when to-morrow you hold this divine Saviour, His grace in such abundance that I may for ever adore, serve, and love Him perfectly. It is an immense consolation to know that you are occupied with that heavenly work "the Divine Love."* With what ardour I sigh for that love ! Alas ! my God, when shall we see one another utterly consumed therewith ?

I have seen the good aunt: what a venerable old lady she is ! I assure you I am well now, and you know I would not say so if it were not true. May Jesus reign and His Holy Mother. Amen.

* The Treatise on the Love of God.

III.

To M. Legros at Dijon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
18*th June*, 1612.

SIR,

We have given your daughter a true welcome. This offering which you and she have made so lovingly cannot fail to be very agreeable to the good God. You may be consoled and at peace about her for she is, and will always be, very dear to me. God obliges me to have an exceeding great care and love for all those whom He leads here and the goodness of your heart, together with her confidence in me, urges and binds me closely to her. I have not leisure for more, but once again, let me assure you that this dear little soul has found here an affectionate Father and Mother, so you may be happy about her. I am extremely obliged to you for the trouble you have taken about that business (illegible lines). . . . May God fill you with grace, consolation, and strength to walk in the way of His divine commandments ! I affectionately salute all your children, for whom I wish a like grace. Madame Legros and I have agreed to be as sisters to one another. I greatly love and esteem her: she is a brave, generous woman. God guide her to Himself.

Always, Sir, your very humble servant,

FRÉMYOT.

IV.

The Duke of Savoy to St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

VERY REVEREND DEARLY BELOVED AND DEVOUT PETITIONER,

Your choice of my daughter, the Infanta Duchess of Mantua, as your Mother and Protectress gives us much pleasure. We are delighted that you have erected your Congregation in our States, as we profoundly esteem your piety, charity, and devotion, and we desire by this letter to assure you that you have our special protection, and that it is our wish to aid, favour, and assist you in all that is necessary for the carrying out of your good work. We have written to this effect to our nephew the Marquis de Lans and to our Senate of Savoy, to which you can always have recourse. The Countess de Tournon is charged to assist the Infanta at the solemnity which you will be celebrating and to instruct her as to her duties in regard to you. May I beg a remembrance in your prayers and in those of your devout flock, whom I pray God to have in His holy keeping.

CHARLES EMMANUEL,
Duke of Savoy.

TURIN,
22*nd* of *December*, 1613.

V.

To Madame d'Auxerre, Foundress of the Monastery of the Visitation at Lyons.*

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1614.

Madame, My most dear and beloved Sister, The grace of Our Lord be in your heart.

He has been pleased to grant you your request and it is He alone who has inspired you with this desire. Again, He alone has put into the hearts of this little

* This pious widow together with two other ladies made a journey to Annecy in 1613 in order to place themselves under the direction of St. Francis de Sales. On their return to Lyons all three petitioned the Archbishop, Mgr. de Marquemont, to establish a Monastery of the Visitation in that town. Before, however, acceding to their request he asked St. Francis the object of the new Order. The Saint at once replied: " To give God souls of prayer who will be so interior as to be found worthy to serve and adore His infinite Majesty in spirit and in truth. To the great Orders already established in the Church we leave the praiseworthy exercises and brilliant virtues by which they honour Our Lord. But I wish that the Religious of my Order should have no other ambition than to glorify Him by their lowliness, so that this little Institute of the Visitation may be as a dovecot of innocent doves whose care and employment will be to meditate on the law of the Lord without making itself seen or heard in the world, remaining hidden in the clefts of the Rock and the Hollow places of the wall there to give to their Beloved, as long as life shall last, proofs of sorrow and love by their lowly and humble sighing."

Community a feeling of general satisfaction in regard to your undertaking, and for this intention we have communicated and prayed much. As for me I tell you, trustfully, in confidence, that when I was speaking to our Lord about this affair His divine goodness seemed to make manifest to me that He Himself led you here with His own hand. This consoled me and made me resolve to give you what He commands, and this my dearly loved Sister is my answer to what you ask. I give it simply and in all sincerity. O how happy you are to have been thus called by God to this most excellent service. Respond courageously to such abundant graces and remain very humble and faithful to His holy will.

I must say this one word more in answer to what you feel as regards God's goodness in giving you as guide this great and admirable servant of His.* Know, my dearest Sister, that I also so strongly feel this, that every day I make a special act of thanksgiving to God for it, and the longer we live the more we shall understand what a grace it is. I remember, in reference to it, a Capuchin once telling me that it increased his regard for me to think of the peculiar care and love that God must have for me to have given me this grace. . . . Remain now full of thanksgiving in peace and certainty, as much as it is possible to have in this life, that you are carrying out God's holy will.

* St. Francis de Sales.

We pray continually for you. All our Sisters unite with me in saluting you most cordially. I, indeed, look upon your heart, my beloved Sister, as mine own, and because this is the very truth you must look upon my heart as yours in His who is our only Love.

Adieu. May we belong always wholly to God.

I remain with incomparable affection,

Yours, etc.

VI.

To St. Francis de Sales.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1614.

I write because I cannot refrain from doing so; for this morning I am more wearisome to myself than usual. My interior state is so gravely defective that, in anguish of spirit, I see myself giving way on every side. Assuredly, my good Father, I am almost overwhelmed by this abyss of misery. The presence of God, which was formerly such a delight to me, now makes me tremble all over and shudder with fear. I bethink myself that the divine eye of Him whom I adore, with entire submission, pierces right through my soul looking with indignation upon all my thoughts, words and works. Death itself, it seems to me, would be less painful to bear than the distress of mind which this occasions, and I feel as

if all things had power to harm me. I am afraid of everything; I live in dread, not because of harm to myself, but because I fear to displease God. Oh, how far away His help seems! thinking of this I spent last night in great bitterness and could utter no other words than these, "My God, my God, alas! why hast Thou forsaken me." At daybreak God gave me a little light in the highest part of my soul, yet only there; but it was almost imperceptible; nor did the rest of my soul and its faculties share the enjoyment, which lasted only about the time of half a Hail Mary, then, trouble rushed back upon me with a mighty force, and all was darkness. Notwithstanding the weariness of this dereliction, I said, though in utter dryness, "Do, Lord, whatever is pleasing to Thee, I wish it. Annihilate me, I am content. Overwhelm me, I most sincerely desire it. Tear out, cut, burn, do just as Thou pleasest, I am Thine." God has shown me that He does not make much account of faith that comes of sentiment and emotions. This is why, though against my inclination, I never wish for sensible devotion. I do not desire it. God is enough for me. Notwithstanding my absolute misery I hope in Him, and I trust He will continue to support me so that His will may be accomplished in me. Take my feeble heart into your hands, my true Father and Lord, and do what you see to be wisest with it.

VII.

To the Sisters of the Monastery of the Visitation of Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

LYONS,
16*th February*, 1615.

Excuse me, I beg of you, my dearest and very good Sisters, if I do not answer you each one separately, which indeed the kindness you have shown me deserves that I should do, and my affection for you would desire: but neither head nor leisure permit it, and besides, God be thanked for it, I see no necessity to write to any one in particular. Persevere in your good desires and every day become more faithful to the observance of your holy Rules and love them better. This alone, believe me, should be your sole care. Cast not a look upon anything else and be assured that you will walk upon the right road and will make a good and prosperous voyage. May God in His infinite mercy be with you and bless you so that you may perfectly accomplish His holy will. With all my heart I desire this, for I love you all, and each one individually, with the greatest possible affection, far beyond what you could imagine. This I tell you all, not forgetting those who have not written to me. God bless you, my very dear daughters. May He be your sole

love and desire. Pray, I beseech you, for the needs of your poor Mother, who is very affectionately

Your most humble and unworthy servant
in our Lord.

VIII.

To Sister Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Assistant and Mistress of Novices at Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

LYONS,
July 9th, 1615.

MY DEAREST SISTER, MY DARLING,

See now how trouble is lifted off your shoulders by the presence you enjoy of my very honoured Lord !* He is most anxious to work at our Rules,† and is about to curtail them considerably at the desire of the Archbishop of Lyons. I think he intends to spend these months of July and August at Annecy, for he tells me that during the great heat he has more leisure, having fewer visitors. I shall be very glad when he has finished the blessed book so much desired and so long awaited.‡ Until I have put it into the printer's hands for publication I am not, I believe, to leave here for Annecy. So if you are in such great need of me, help by your fidelity and your prayers to secure time for this good and

* St. Francis de Sales.
† The Saint here calls the Constitutions by this name.
‡ The Treatise on the Love of God.

dear Lord to complete the work. The whole day, as far as he is free, ought to be devoted to it, but though it no longer requires much application, yet it progresses very slowly: such is the will of the great God, and may His will be accomplished here and everywhere. For all that, you must keep up your courage; we shall find September upon us before we know where we are, and then God will console us. You cannot think how I am looking forward to my return—I am simply longing for it; but, my love, His Lordship does not agree with you as to its present necessity; he considers I am more useful here now, to satisfy certain persons. Meanwhile, I am getting on with our little business, and I trust, through the goodness of God and the brave heart of my dearest Sister, that all will go tranquilly till I return. Please God, I will do so at the appointed time, when the business of the house will be more pressing. Then I shall relieve my poor little Sister of the burden as much as I am able, and she will have nothing to do but to kindle in the hearts of her dear novices the love of their Spouse, and to caress her poor mother, who is so fond of her. Do not forget the sweetmeats for the poor nor the dried fruit, as much as you can procure of it. In the month of September lay in a provision of butter and cheese; Sister Anne Jacqueline (Coste) will help you in this. I am a little surprised that you tell me there is only corn enough for the end of this month,

for it ought to have lasted till the end of September. Perhaps you have not paid for what was due, or you may not have returned what was advanced to you for the masons. Anyhow you must buy more as soon as it is wanted; but for these two first months purchase the old corn rather than the new. After that, awaiting the season for laying in provisions, we shall see as soon as possible if my son cannot return part of what he has had from us, until he is able to pay it all back.

See that Sister Marguerite (Milletot) writes to say that we shall keep her pension here, and tell her to ask out boldly for the ewer and the gown about which so many promises have been made to her. They need make no excuse about not being able to send them for it is quite easy to get things from here to Dijon. You must treat poor Sister Mary Madeleine (de Mouxy) very gently, and she will, I think, in time, see for herself what is necessary. I am writing in great haste, for this letter goes by the Bishop. It is absolutely necessary to build the sacristies, complete the church, and enclose the little court, for you know we must have more accommodation. Then we'll stop. As to the continuation of the buildings, we must wait and see what can be done when what we are now doing is finished. If we buy the houses, as his Lordship tells me, and have the Fathers' garden, that will be a good bit of business done.

I salute affectionately my very dear and beloved

Sisters. May Jesus be all things to them, and they all to Jesus. Amen.

My kind remembrances also to my son M. Michel (Favre),* to all our friends, and to the workmen. I send two combs for my daughters to tease the red wool, and two ells of material to cover the bodice of a dress for little Françoise, and two of stuff, which is very ugly but most expensive, for the bodice of a petticoat, for sleeves and neck kerchiefs, to last her over the summer. Please God, for the future I'll choose her clothing myself, and not trust it to anyone else.

Goodbye, and a happy Vespers,† my dear good Sister. It is nearly noon and we are only just out from table; for the Archbishop of Lyons, as usual, came about 10 o'clock,‡ and then came Madame Saint Chamond. Give me your best prayers, for I am most truly miserable. Nevertheless, may the great God accomplish His holy will in us! Amen.

IX.

To Sister Péronne Marie de Châtel at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1615.

MY DEARLY BELOVED SISTER,

Your letters delight me, they are altogether after my own heart, that heart that so loves its dear Péronne. It is true, my child, that in this life we

* The Convent Chaplain at Annecy.

† The Octave Day of the Feast of the Visitation.

‡ The Sisters' dinner hour.

must always be beginning anew, but if it were not so where should we be? For this is essential to our humility and to confidence, the two virtues our good God asks of us. Be brave, train yourself to courage and to exactitude in the observance. Keep a light heart, and above all things put sadness far from you. God is wholly ours, and we, my daughter, have no other wish than to be wholly His. How then can we be solicitous about anything whatsoever? When you have time give me news of that heart that is so dear to me and that I know so well, I say, so well, thanks be to God.

I am quite easy as to dearest Sister Marie Jacqueline, for I never doubted but that she would be a success, yet to hear your assurance of it is very consoling. Give her all the help you can so as to lighten as much as possible the burden of her charge. Look after her health; I entrust it to you, and on this point she is to go by what you say.

I beseech you, my love, be a good example to others, avoid all useless conversation, never absent yourself from the community assemblies without real necessity. Give challenges to spur each other on to virtue. Let your chief care be to inculcate recollection, practise it yourself in good earnest, it ought to be preeminently our practice. Incite one another to it, and to seek Our Lord, and our own perfection in singleness of heart.

I have received all your letters and the other

things you sent by Chambéry, but they came very late. Another time, my dearest daughter, to give you comfort we'll talk as you desire, heart to heart, but I am feeling the cold to-day, and am pressed for time. In a word, humility, exact observance, holy confidence and joy in God.

Our very dear Father is, he says, entirely yours. All our Sisters salute you. To conclude, you are, as I told you the other day, my own dear Péronne, whom I love with all my heart. When M. Michel goes to see you he will give you plenty of news; he is not, however, going for some little time yet.

Yours wholly in Jesus.

X.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✣ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1615.

They have taken me by surprise. Here is M. de Boisy, who tells me that if I wish to write to you, my daughter, now is the opportunity. He starts at dawn, and so at dawn I write this letter in all haste. Well, as to your letters, they always give me pleasure and console me exceedingly. All praise to the good God who I see leads you and holds you by His paternal Hand, so that you have nothing to do but to cling close to it, and leave yourself to Him, walking with all possible humility, and simplicity,

under His holy protection, while you train your little flock to advance faithfully, for it is in this way that He wishes you to show your fidelity, and it is for this end that I always tell you, my dearest, that you should keep yourself, as much as the performance of necessary duties allow, free and disengaged from occupations, so that you may be continually in the midst of your Sisters at the times that they are assembled together, thus will you enlighten and animate them in their duty by example as well as by precept. I quite agree with our worthy and excellent Archbishop. He is right, my daughter, believe me, you must be Mother and Mistress. Nevertheless, it is well to try the capacity of Sister Marie Aimée,* for she is good, though a little too reserved and somewhat lazy, letting nature dictate, and yet I hope that she will, notwithstanding, further the progress of these dear children by good example and by her tongue if she lets it loose. Moreover, as you will often be unable to be with them yourself, she can take your place, and thus be a constant relief to you. Your resolve about Madame Raime is quite to my mind. Deduct the amount of the damask plums from what you receive and you can ask M. de Medio† and M. Voullart as to how to act. Be at ease about the dearly loved Péronne Marie.

* Sister Marie Aimée de Blonay had just been made Mistress of Novices, a charge which she greatly dreaded.

† Canon of Lyons.

I never thought of what they told you, but do not on that account delay to train these girls to housework, for most certainly charity obliges you to give the good daughter a rest after she has put the house in good order, and others have been trained for this purpose. Alas ! my dearest daughter, I have great compassion for poor Sister ——. Undoubtedly, her imagination plays a large part in her case, but our good Archbishop and the confessor ought to help in the curing of her. Treat as despicable and in no manner condone what she esteems so much in herself. I will write to her as to the others when I have leisure. You must take great care of the good Sister ——. Keep her bright, and as much occupied as possible, see that she eats and sleeps well, for usually any weakness of the brain lends itself to such temptations of the imagination, so, dear daughter, show her infinite compassion, charity, and patience. God and time will reveal to us what it is all about.

Daylight is breaking, and I have nothing very special to say except, indeed, that you ought to be very grateful for the blessing God has conferred upon you in giving you as fathers two such exceptionally great and worthy prelates, whose remarkable piety pleases God and man.* I cannot tell you what a consolation it is to me to see how God has united these two souls, and I believe this union will bring Him more glory than our little judgements are

* St. Francis de Sales and Mgr. de Marquemont.

capable of understanding. So with all my heart I praise God for having given me this consolation which I have so long prayed for and desired, clearly seeing how much good it would effect, and the solace of mind it would bring to our worthy Lord Archbishop, whose goodness merits and needs it. His dear Lordship here is full of kindness, and in perfect accord with this prelate, and has a great reverence for him. I will write as soon as possible to these dear children; meanwhile, give them my affectionate love. May the great Jesus fill their hearts with sweetness, simplicity, and innocence! My respectful and affectionate remembrance to my Lord Archbishop. My regards also to good Father Philip de Saint-Nizier, the chaplain, and whoever else you think I ought to mention. Do not tell the President* that you do not get letters from me for I never fail to write when there is an opportunity. Remember me very specially to your two dear companions, my daughters, and most dear Sisters.

Good-morning, my love. May Jesus be your all. Amen.

XI.

To the Same

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1615.

. . . . I think you have received both the letters that I have written to you since our arrival. Now

* Antoine Favre, Mother Marie Jacqueline's father.

to answer yours, which has been a joy beyond words to me: so is it in your power, my dearest Sister and friend, to give me true pleasure. You are indeed happy in serving our Lord and His holy Mother: give your service, my beloved friend, with boundless joy and courage. Our very good Father, whom as yet I have hardly seen, wrote you the other day an excellent and beautiful letter.* Ah! how blessed are they who hide themselves in the sacred breast of the Saviour, and elsewhere find no delight. But I really must answer your letter. I am writing during the Sisters' supper, and I have had no time as yet to converse with any of them. Keep firm to the line you have adopted with M. de Saint-Nizier, that is all I have to say on that point. I must answer Père Théodose, but it is you who ought to do this. Yes, I told Sister —— that you would give her a little book on perfection, but she must not let her

* In this letter, having consoled her for the departure of Sister J. F. de Chantal, Saint Francis addresses these sweet words to her: "We need never part from one another, we whom the very blood of Our Lord—that is to say, His love, through the merits of His blood—binds and unites together. Indeed, as for me, I am in very truth so entirely yours that in proportion to the distance that these two or three days of journeying seem to separate us corporally the more strongly and with the more affection am I united spiritually to you as to my very dear daughter. You will be the first after our Mother (de Chantal) in my prayers and my solicitude, a solicitude, however, which is more sweet through the extreme confidence which I have in the heavenly care of divine Providence for your soul."—(M. S. Lives of the First Mothers, by Mère de Chaugy.)

imagination run away with her, so as to think she possesses all the good qualities she desires and which she hears discussed. Keep her gently and cordially humble, and believe me, my love, she will, please God, do very well.

There are countless things, my dearest Sister, that I long to say about the true and sincere affection I have for you, and this because I verily believe that we are not separated, but more united than ever, for our mutual intercourse by letter brings home to us, it seems to me, all the more forcibly our affection. O God! may this love be eternal: our life here is too short to suffice for the enjoyment of so great a good! But to answer your little questions. God be praised for the zeal of our good Sisters in holy obedience. Oh! but it is sweet and pleasant news to me, and for them an inestimable treasure. I beseech these dearest daughters, whom I truly love, to give all the consolation possible by following after perfection holily and faithfully. Oh, my God, we have only, my dearest one, my Sister, to die or to love our good Saviour. Amen.

His Lordship has, through the chaplain, acceded to the desire of Madame Colin. You have answered N. right well; no thanks are needed in such matters. If I can I will write to M.; if not, do it yourself, my love, for these are our affairs. Believe me, I pray much, and will continue to do so for you, and still more for your dear Father and Mother. . . .

XII.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1615.

MY DEAREST SISTER, MY DARLING,

First of all it is quite true that I am entirely at your service. Next, it is from no lack of diligence on my part that you have been kept so long without news of us, for we have frequently sent to the tradespeople to find out if any were going to Lyons. You must not, then, think that I am wanting in care or affection for you. I do not know how that traveller you speak of passed through without my knowing. Now to answer your letters, though I assure you I have to do so in the greatest haste. We have sent you our Office books, and the carrier has delivered everything from you—the beautiful candlesticks and the crucifixes, for which, above all, we thank you. God will give you all that is necessary to instruct these girls from Riom. It is well that you have them, for it is essential that they come either here or to Lyons, otherwise it would be impossible for us for a good long while to provide subjects suitable for foundations. Truly the making of Superiors is not the matter of a day.

The First President of Toulouse has written to his Lordship asking for Sisters for a foundation, and he has replied that he will see to subjects being

formed for it. This community is becoming very large, and needs assiduous care. Mademoiselle du Châtelard and Mademoiselle d'Avise were here last week, and asked with great humility and earnestness that the votes might be taken for their admittance as probationers. This has been done, and they are coming at the beginning of the approaching great feasts. Both souls are altogether to my liking. Several others are applying for admission. . . .

We must charitably bear with N., and employ both the green wood and the dry to keep her brothers and sisters away from her, and to induce her to curtail her correspondence. She is in bondage to these things, and never will she have courage to break her chains if she is not helped. May God in His mercy take her by His good hand and lead her out of all superfluous cares. His grace the Archbishop has acted prudently in at once settling that her sister is not to be received, to do otherwise would have been inexpedient. She ought not to put upon us these great obligations to *Madame la présidente* Le Blanc* who is one of those women of the world whom I greatly admire. A thousand cordial salutations to her.

My darling, for the love of God always write quite openly to me about all your little affairs, and don't take the trouble to copy your letters. I say this not only for myself but also on the part of our good

* See note to Letter XIX., page 49.

Lord, and it will suffice to write only to one or other of us, for we are as one by the grace of God, and I see that so much writing gives you headaches. This too will economize your time. You will easily be excused by everybody, except perhaps by the dear brother de Boisy*, for the rest they must write to you and not expect answers unless you have time and want to recreate yourself. I am undecided whether or no to write to M. Austrain, but in any case be sure to offer him my respects. His little daughter† is indeed very happy. Three of us have the special care of her. She is very charming, but M. and Mme. Austrain ought to inculcate obedience, and tell her that they always hold it in reverence. I am very fond of her and so are all our Sisters. Assure them of this, and that I greatly desire to serve them and to give them satisfaction in regard to her. In reference to this over affection that you have for me, you are doing quite right. Alas! dearest daughter, I am not exempt from these feelings. In such things be very generous in the guard you keep over yourself; hardly ever speak of it, still less think of it: feelings of this kind should be

* The Count de Boisy was brother of St. Francis de Sales.

† The Monastery of Lyons was under obligations to M. Austrain, and St. Jane Frances took his little daughter back with her to Annecy at his desire. Subsequent letters show that this child did not respond to the Saint's kindness and had to be sent away.

borne with silently and sweetly, taking, as it were, no notice of them.

How consoled I should be if M. D. is caught in the net. May the good God do this mercy. I want you to get news of the temporal affairs of our late good Sister Marie Renée (Trunel) from the General of the Feuillants, and to ask his opinion; the first paper which Sister Péronne Marie (de Châtel) sent was a rough draft; you will have received what we wrote to you by M. Voullart. For God's sake, darling, do all you can soon to procure the money that should come to us for Sister F. A., as we are in great necessity, and nobody wants to pay us. M. Voullart has the authority for receiving it (illegible lines). . . .

Adieu, my love, I am all right as to health, but I want to improve otherwise when I have time to think about it. I intend to take full advantage of my co-adjutrice. I don't know which to choose unless Sister N. Sister P. M. [de Châtel] would make an excellent one. Some day please God I hope to have her, meantime I advise you to make use of her for yourself.

Adieu, once more. Let us be His for ever and ever.*

* The Lives of Mother Favre, de Bréchard and de Châtel are given in the " Lives of the First Mothers of the Visitation," by Mother de Chaugy. There is a recent life of Mother de Châtel under the title of " Péronne Marie " (Burns and Oates), in which are introduced slight character-sketches of Mothers Favre, de Bréchard, de Blonay and de Sautereau.

XIII.

To Sister Péronne Marie de Châtel at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
January, 1616.

At last, my dearest daughter, I take up your letter to answer it as far as I am able. May the good God inspire me to say what is for His glory and your consolation. All the repugnances of which you speak, all your feelings, aversions, difficulties, are all to my judgement for your greater good, and you are bound not to yield to them. You should keep making resolutions every day to fight and resist them—nevertheless when you fall, say fifty times a day, never on any account be astonished or uneasy, but quite gently reproach yourself, and take up again the practice of the contrary virtue, saying all the time words of love and confidence to Our Lord, and saying them just as much after you have fallen into a thousand faults as if you had only fallen into one. Do not forget all we have said to you on this subject, and practise it for the love of God, being assured that God will draw His glory and your perfection out of this infirmity, never have a doubt on this point, and bear up bravely and sweetly whatever happens. If sometimes you feel weak, cowardly, with no confidence in God, compel your lips to utter words the very opposite to your feelings, and say

them firmly. My Saviour, my all, notwithstanding my miseries, and my distrust, I trust Thee out and out, for Thou art the strength of the weak, the refuge of the miserable, the wealth of the poor, in a word Thou art my Saviour, who hast ever loved the sinner. Now these and like words, my dearest daughter, you can say, and though with neither devotion nor tears, yet with set purpose. Then pass on to divert your mind in some way, for the Almighty will not let you escape from His hand, which has so securely captured you, and do you not see how His sweet goodness comes to your succour in so striking and profitable a manner ?

I beg of you preserve the remembrance of the instructions you have received in the past, and put them into practice, whenever occasion offers. When you feel the need of writing to me, write. I will always answer you promptly, and with the truthfulness of a heart that is wholly yours. Be very careful to give good example. Fidelity and exactness in observance is, as you know, necessary for this, and also a well-ordered exterior, the basis of which depends on the practice of the presence of God. As far as you can quietly manage it release yourself from household duties. I have already spoken to Sister * about this, and you will, I think, find her of my opinion, for otherwise those for whom the charges are intended cannot be fittingly

* Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre.

trained. Certainly, my love, I am altogether satisfied and consoled with your dear little Mother, who is with you; every one tells me how well she gets on and what you yourself continue to write about her gives me increasing pleasure, for I know with what sincerity you speak. I trust in God that she will be one day a great and worthy servant of His and that she will do good to many. She ought to steep herself ever more in humility and grow in resignation: help her according to your little lights, and tell her simply in all truth, what seems to you for her own good and for that of the house. God knows how sincerely I love her; I know her heart and how she feels under obligation to you, while you are conscious that the obligation is on your side. I am well aware of the help and profit that I receive from my coadjutrix; such is an inestimable blessing for superiors, who from the multiplicity of affairs cannot give sufficient attention to minor things which it is expedient should be remedied. Let me once more beg of you, my dear little Péronne, to further in every way you can my desire that our dear Sister's spirits are kept up, and without teasing her have an eye to her health; tell her frankly what is necessary, and see that she does it, for she ought to yield to you in this, just as you should obey her quite simply when she orders what she considers necessary for your health. You can humbly represent to her how much you feel able to do, but in such a way that she

may have no reason to distrust or be displeased with you. It is better to exceed in charity than in labour, and for God's sake never give way to disquietude: do everything you can to get well, for it is only your nerves. I must conclude, for I am feeling somewhat indisposed. A hundred thousand loves to all our dearest sisters; indeed with all my heart I love your little flock. May their thoughts be ever set on their Spouse, and may they hold intercourse with Him like pure, sweet, simple, chaste doves. I embrace them all, big and little, lovingly and tenderly, in spirit, but above all do I embrace my well-loved Péronne. His Lordship salutes you and loves you tenderly. Vive Jésus.

XIV.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
January 4th, 1616.

Only one word, my poor dear daughter, for there is no time to write as much as I should wish. Hardly has one been told that there is an opportunity of sending a letter than they come to fetch it. For the love of God, my dear friend, do not allow yourself to be so easily carried away by your affections. Hold fast in God your spirit, your love, and all your

pleasure. Keep your heart strong and generous, and interior joy will come back to you. We are not separated, my dearest daughter, be assured of this, and when it is necessary to think and speak of me accustom yourself to do so with a free and joyous spirit as if I were present to you. Ah ! my love, to know that our good God is everywhere, and that He is always ready to be to us, Father, Mother, sweet and gentle Spouse, should indeed make us happy. I am very glad that you have taken Mme. de Chevrières for a mother;* she is a virtuous and useful friend and I greatly like her: offer her my humble respects. Our poor dear Sisters' Christmas carols are very nice. I love all these dear hearts: tell them so, darling, I beg of you. . . .

In your next letter say how you are really feeling, for I cannot say that I like to hear of your getting thin. My daughter de Thorens has written to me (illegible lines), speaks of the marriage of M. de Foras with Françoise. Madame is wrong, I assure you, my dear friend, in blaming his Lordship† for not writing to her. I see very little of him, and I cannot tell you how long it is since I last spoke with him: he is overwhelmed with business. However,

* It was a common custom at this epoch to contract spiritual alliances as a mark of reverence, gratitude, and affection. It is of such an alliance that Saint Jane Frances here approves. Madame de Chevrières was a pious and devoted friend of the monastery at Lyons.

† St. Francis de Sales.

if I see him I will ask him to write to her, and I shall do so myself, if possible.

Well, most certainly I pity the good Archbishop of Lyons with his rules: the poor man is worrying himself to death over them. Why on earth does he not fish where he knows there is plenty of water. Do not send the regulations that he has made for us without also sending the rules, and get to know as tactfully as you can what he is planning and the cause of this delay.

As to exterior mortifications, they are performed here in the right spirit and with devotion. You know them: Some prostrate across the doorway with face to the ground, others hold out their arms in the form of a cross, others again wear a cord round their neck, and ask pardon, or mention and deplore their imperfections out loud, ask for an alms and the like. However, I permit them but rarely, because frequency lessens their power, and when done with devotion they profit and mortify those who perform them, and edify the others. You can of course allow them, but only at the times set down, unless the Sisters ask your permission, and let this come from themselves (illegible lines).

They have come to fetch the letters. Good-day, dearest daughter. Always yours. Be humble in all things, and practice mortification of spirit. Vive Jésus.

XV.

To Sisters Péronne Marie de Châtel and Marie Aimée de Blonay.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1616.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTERS,

I will begin by answering your last letter, and then go back as far as I am able to the preceding one, saying, please God, what He wishes me to say to you.

First, then, my dear daughter, I'll tell you what Our Lord wants of you and of us all, a humble and tranquil submission to His most holy will in whatsoever happens, for everything is, without question, ordained by divine Providence for His glory, and for our gain; henceforth to be indifferent to health or sickness, consolation or desolation, the enjoyment or privation of what we most cherish, should be our aim. May our hearts have but one desire, that His holy will be accomplished in us and in regard to us. Let us not philosophize on things that happen to ourselves or to others, but, as I have already said, remaining sweetly humble, and tranquil, in the condition in which God has placed us. In pain patient, in sorrow enduring, in action active, without stopping to think whether we commit faults in this way or that, for such reflections are nothing but self-love.

Instead of all that, look at God, and take faithfully as it presents itself every opportunity of practising suitable virtues. When you fail through cowardice or infidelity be not disturbed, make no reflections, humble yourself in meekness and confusion before God, and then lose no time in rising up again by an act of courage and holy confidence.

Now, my daughter (Péronne Marie), and my little one (Marie Aimée), do thus; this letter is for you both in common, for I know that your hearts hide nothing from one another. In future, as I have so little leisure, I will always write to you together, unless you tell me that, for some particular reason, you wish me to answer you individually, in which case I will willingly do so, for I am at your disposal. Believe me, I love you with all my heart, and I have to bear my fair share in the mortification of your absence, though indeed you are more than ever present to me in spirit; but the good God has arranged it so, and all is sweet in His holy will.

You, my Péronne, and the little Sister, when you happen to be ill, receive relief willingly and graciously. And mind, in whatever form it comes, whether it be to rise, to go to bed, to eat, obey simply, and without making difficulties. My dear Péronne, walk manfully in your old way, both as to the interior, and the exterior. When you are asked what point of prayer you take, and the like, answer boldly

as to what you have done or thought formerly in this way: "I have had such thoughts in prayer or done such things while walking about, or when in bed"; but do not say: "To-day, or at such an hour, I have done such a thing." It is not necessary to be so explicit, but simply say, "I have done or seen such a thing," and have no scruple in calling all your good aspirations and thoughts prayer, for they are prayer, and so, for the matter of that, are all our actions when done to please God. It is enough to salute your good Angel morning and evening. Attention to the presence of God and of Our Lady includes all, for the blessed Spirits are engulphed in the abyss of the Divinity, and it is more perfect to walk simply. When a novice says to you, "What are you thinking of?" answer frankly, "I am thinking of God," without saying (if it is not so), I was thinking of the Passion, and the like, for no doubt to mention a particular subject (if we were not thinking of it) would be an untruth. Say simply, "I was thinking of Our Lord," and you might, for example, add, "My God, how happy we should be if we could always have the Holy Passion or the Nativity before our eyes." This gives edification enough. I see nothing else to say.

Oh! but yes; just a word for my Little One. I beg of you, my dearest Sister, not to trouble about what you feel or do not feel—this I say once for all. Serve Our Lord as it pleases Him, and while He keeps you

in the desert serve Him there with good courage. He made His dear Israelites spend forty years there, accomplishing a journey that they could have made in forty days. Take courage then, and be satisfied with saying, and being able to say, though without relish, " I wish to live wholly for God and never to offend Him;" and when you stumble, as is sure to happen (be it a hundred times a day), rise up again by an act of confidence. Do likewise towards your neighbour, be content with having the desire to love him, or desiring to desire it, and to procure for him all possible good, and, opportunity given, minister gently to him.

In short take bravely the road in which God leads you—it is a safe one, although you may not have all the light and satisfaction you would like; but it is quite time to abandon to Our Lord all these plans and desires, and to walk blindly, as divine Providence wills, believing that it will lead you aright. Now, adieu. Our good M. Michel (Favre) will tell you all the news. Needless to say, I recommend him to you, for I am extremely fond of him. He is our dear brother and child: entirely devoted to us. Thousands of cordial messages to those most dear daughters of my heart, and special messages to whom you know, and to all, for indeed I most truly love them all.

Adieu, my beloved daughters.

XVI.

To Mother M. J. Favre.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1616.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

Your letter deeply touches me. May God give us genuine humility, sweetness, and submission, for with these virtues there is truth, but without them usually deception and no sure dependence. No need to consult about this good woman, she must be put out, for a thousand reasons. Unless God give you light to the contrary, beware of acting on any human reasons put forward by her relations. You must drink the chalice, my daughter, and bear with contempt for the sake of exact observance. But act, I pray you, in this matter with gentleness and consideration, saying nothing that might cause any trouble to this poor woman.*

* Elsewhere St. Jane Frances thus sums up for her daughters the views expressed to her on religious life by their Founder, St. Francis de Sales. " In truth, there are few monasteries which do not possess some one who gives a great example of virtue, but the majority are weak and neither great nor elevated in character. This evil is brought about by persons becoming religious who are not yet really good Christians. Such know indeed their Founder and their constitutions, but they have little knowledge of Jesus Christ and His gospels. They aspire to become perfect in a day, while yet they are unaware of their own miseries and need of justification. They expect to be cured without thoroughly knowing their disease or the

As to Mdlle. N., we only have knowledge of her in so far as to be able to say that we fear her becoming very dejected from her melancholy and unstable temperament. However, you will have to receive

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physician. They begin with the roof instead of with the foundations, and are eager to offer to the divine Master what He has only recommended as a counsel, without taking the trouble to give Him what He exacts as a debt. From hence come so many dissensions, murmurings, and complaints about trivial things, so much imprudence, so many indiscretions, suspicions, rash judgements, attachments to one's own inclinations and way of thinking, and to trifles; such impatience of contempt, so little fervour in prayer, so little reverence for the holy mysteries, so little fruit from confession and frequent communion, such a poor conception and idea of the life to come, so little gratitude to Jesus Christ, so little solidity and dignity in the practices of devotion. The remedy for all these evils is to employ the time of noviceship in learning truly to know the adorable Master; His precepts, maxims and counsels, by a thorough explanation of His gospel; truly to understand the nobility of man, whom God only can render happy; his fall and his misery, which the Incarnation and the death of a God could alone remedy: the corruption of his heart, of which self-love is master; the inability in himself to do any good without the grace of Jesus Christ: the never-ending danger from that concupiscence which, though conquered, is always within him; the necessity of continual prayer, of solitude, of penance, in order to keep the senses subject to the spirit; truly to understand how terrible God is in His judgements, how heinous are the sins committed after baptism, how differently we shall look upon things after death, and what a heavy responsibility for us will be the life and death of the Redeemer: truly to learn the folly of despising these truths and the sanctity which the grace of the law of this Jesus exacts from us, He who is our Saviour and our Model."

her for a first trial and to tell her frankly that she will be obliged to undergo at least four months' probation in the house before she receives the habit. As to the condition she wishes to lay down of being always with you after her profession, it is not to be heard of. She must not claim to make arrangements on becoming a Religious, as if she was purchasing a farm-house; therefore, should there be no conditions in her contract, and no reserves, the only thing she can reserve to herself is the resolution never to do her own will, and to live peaceably and humbly in the Congregation. I beg of you, my true daughter, maintain a gentle and a humble, a generous and a joyous heart in the midst of the bustle of affairs, for this God requires of you.

You are right in thinking our Sisters de Châtel and de Blonay are two pearls of virtue. They have not a little obliged me in so candidly opening their hearts to you. I never doubted but that they would do so, and I am sure you will always receive consolation and support from them. Gently encourage the dear *Cadette** to be more expansive and open-hearted with the sisters. She can do it if she look humbly unto God and overcome herself. I beg of her to teach her novices to see the advantage of correction, and to love it. They ought to aspire to great purity of life and become familiar in their

* A name given by St. Francis to Mother Marie Aimée de Blonay.

communications with their divine Spouse. I shall not write to them now; it suffices that we two, whom God has so intimately united, confer with one another. God bless you, my child, I am very glad to know the state of your heart. Keep it one with God in fidelity to the Rule and a stranger to all unprofitable things; for, my true daughter, God has appointed you for my succour and to carry with me the burden which He Himself has laid upon me. Do not say that you are inconsolable on account of our separation. I assure you that I write much more to you than I tell our sisters here. We do not see one another it is true, but that is all, and I think a little corporal absence renders you more present to the mind than if you were present. In everything else we never make any difference between you and our Sisters here, if it be not that you are more loved and more carefully instructed. Now pity yourself no more, since Jesus Christ is the privileged bond that unites us.

Yours, etc.

XVII.

To Madame de Gouffier.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY.
17*th July*, 1616.

I can only send you this little note, my dearest daughter, but his Lordship is answering your letters. Our Sisters (Favre and de Châtel) are to arrive this

evening, so you can imagine how busy we are getting ready for them. God be blessed for all you tell me, and may the work you have undertaken be to you a precious crown for the greater honour of God and for our consolation.

Certainly, very dear daughter, if the glory of God and your reputation were not so much involved in this transaction we should never risk sending our sisters. Our reasons would be unalterable in regard to anyone save you yourself. Sister Jeanne Charlotte will tell you what they are. The experience of Lyons has taught us to walk circumspectly. But we have not the heart to disappoint this daughter who is so much one of ourselves. May God be your portion and ours for all eternity! It is impossible for me to leave this house at present, so I cannot accompany the Sisters whom we are sending to Lyons. They will arrive, please God, on the 29th of this month, and they can start with you on the 5th or 6th of August, but not before. We shall write again by them. May God love us, and our love be all for Jesus eternally.

Adieu, my daughter. I embrace you with all my soul which is wholly yours. But let us not engage in any more combats until we are fully armed! I prefer to have few monasteries and those well established than many badly provided.*

* Madame de Gouffier, a religious of the Order of the Holy Ghost, was attracted to greater devotion by reading

XVIII.

To Mother Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY.
June, 1616.

MY OWN DEAREST DAUGHTER,

You and all the dear Sisters to whom I am in debt must needs be perpetually pardoning me. Only at the last moment are we told of an opportunity to send letters, and having no time to get mine ready beforehand I am constrained to write in a breathless fashion. They have just come to say

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the "Introduction to a Devout Life," and made a long journey to confer with its author, St. Francis de Sales. The Sister annalist of the Order tells us that Madame de Gouffier, on arriving, "Devoutly ferretted out all she could about the rising Congregation to see if it might not be the promised land designed by God for her, in which she hoped to find rivers flowing with milk and honey. Full of admiration for the new Institute, Madame de Gouffier wished to become a member, but insurmountable impediments opposed her design, and she could only obtain permission to wear the religious habit within the enclosure, where she was known under the name of Sister Marie Elizabeth. With tireless energy the new benefactress gave a helping hand to the foundations of Lyons, Moulins, and Paris, in all of which houses she successively sojourned, ever seeking to make herself useful to the Sisters, whose virtue was indisputably made manifest by the thorns without number with which, all unwittingly, she strewed their paths. Towards the end of 1621 Madame de Gouffier quitted her exile here below for the true *Promised Land*."

that Sire Pierre sets out to-morrow. Patience in all things! However, as I want to write to our sisters, and very fully to you, and very particularly to my son M. Michel, those letters I will send by the chaplain. You now know for certain what are our good Lord's intentions regarding the Religious question: I mean the conversion of our Congregation into a Religious Order, with the conditions laid down for us, which are all excellent, and about which our resolution is unalterable. This step has been before the Archbishop of Lyons for a long time, and he did not wish it to be known. But what does it matter to us, I pray you, whether our vows are solemn, or made as they are in public, or whether we are to be called a *Religious Order* or a *Congregation?* Such things do not signify at all. We have always shown that we are willing for it on condition that nothing whatever is changed as to the end of our Institute or the means of attaining that end, to which, thanks be to God, we have, up to this, adhered for His glory and the salvation of our neighbour. We do not ask or seek to be brought forward, and only wish to be left as we are, content to remain in our littleness, and infinitely preferring it if the glory of God does not demand otherwise.

Now, dearest daughter, your mind will be clear on this subject, and you can satisfy those who make inquiries. I greatly desire that our good Father Rector, a man of great virtue and capability, should

know all, and give his opinion on the whole matter to the Bishop, who is anxious to have it. His last letter to me gives the impression that he thinks quite the reverse of the above. For the rest, dearest daughter, if you have an opportunity get the Archbishop to write and tell his Lordship how he means to act in regard to the Bishop's last letter, for this is of importance to the affair in Rome; but do not let him see any eagerness on your part or that you have been asked to do this. Enough on this subject.

What a grace has not the good God done us these six years in having called us to true perfection by a manner of life so fitting to our sex. Ever blessed be this divine Saviour. I tried to-day to renew my heart fervently so as henceforth to live in accordance with God's holy will. My great longing for you, who are so dear to me, is that you may bravely cast aside all that is not of God, and having but one heart, that you may keep it exclusively for the one Saviour, who has given His dear life to win our love and our salvation. . . .

Let us have a great love for our Sisters and bear gently and sweetly with their little miseries and weaknesses, without which we shall never be, and thus make good use of the first-fruits of the spirit which God has diffused on us here, and on you.

What joy took possession of my heart yesterday, dearest daughter, when I caught a glimpse of a chance of seeing you again, and what noise and

excitement at recreation when I gave the news of your coming! Truly it is delightful to see how they all love you. Don't you think that it is quite necessary for me to keep my pleasure to myself in case you do not come, for they would all be so disappointed? Alas! my poor Péronne, if she is not cured she must come back to Annecy, for she will be useless to you and the change of air may be good for her. God knows how welcome she will be, but I fear you will miss her for your little ménage: however, God will provide.

I hope you will not give the habit to the good N. until she has completed her six months. If I have time I will write her a little note; if I cannot, her humility will bear with me, and her charity will be indulgent to me. I beg of her to ask God to grant me the grace of being entirely His.

A thousand salutations, daughter darling, to you and all your dear flock (a little special word to our two).* Remembrance also to the Rev. Father Rector, to my dear nephew, and to whom else you please. Aye, truly sister de Gouffier may well be admired! I shall write to her by the chaplain when he returns. She is only losing her time, and I am astonished that she has not written to me. Yes, indeed, she is losing her time. Adieu, my darling, *this holy day of the Feast of St. Claude.*

Yours, etc.

* Srs. Péronne Marie de Châtel and Marie Aimée de Blonay.

XIX.

*To Sister Marie Aimée de Blonay, Mistress of Novices at Lyons.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1616.

Who can doubt, little one, but that a thousand imperfections are mingled with all our actions. We must humble ourselves and own to it, but never be surprised nor worry about it. Neither is it well to

* We are told in the "History of the Foundation of Annecy" that Sister Marie Aimée de Blonay fulfilled her duties as Mistress of Novices with such submission and reverence as entirely to justify the beautiful name of "The Living Rule," by which she is known throughout the Order; for her actions and her teaching were a faithful carrying out of what she had learned from its two holy Founders. She often inculcated the following doctrine: "Just as the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, and always must be, the universal foundation of our obedience and of our belief, even though there were a million new worlds, so should the particular maxims of the Visitation of Annecy be common to all houses of the Institute, even though it should increase to millions upon millions of monasteries." It gave St. Francis such pleasure to hear this ingenious comparison of the Rule to the Gospel that he ordered the following to be inserted in the acts and conditions of establishment for every new foundation: "That the Sisters undertake to live according to the Rules, Constitutions, and customs of the Monastery of Annecy." And in answer to a letter about this time from his dear "Cadette," he says: "My daughter, make use of this light all your life. Tell what you have seen, teach what you have heard at Annecy. This root is indeed little, insignificant, and hidden, but the branch that

play with the thought, but having made an interior act of holy humility, turn from it at once and pay no further attention to your feelings. Now let me hear no more about them, but use them all as a means of humbling yourself and of abasing yourself before God. Behave yourself in His presence as being truly nothing, and if you do, these feelings about which you talk will not do you any harm though they will make you suffer. Indeed, as much may be said of this fault of over-sensitiveness. Pray what does it matter whether you are dense and stolid or over-sensitive? Any one can see that all this is simply self-love seeking its satisfaction. For the love of God let me hear no more of it: love your own insignificance and the most holy will of God which has allotted it to you, then whether you are liked or disliked, reserved or ready-tongued, it should be one and the same thing to you. Do not pose as an ignorant person, but try to speak to each one as being in the presence of God and in the way He inspires you. If you are content with what you have said your self-love will be satisfied, if not content, then you have an opportunity of practising holy humility. In a word aim at indifference and

separates from it is fit for nothing but to be cut down and cast into the fire."

The life of Mother Marie Aimée de Blonay was written by Charles Auguste de Sales, nephew and one of the successors of St. Francis de Sales in the See of Geneva.

cut short absolutely this introspection and all these reflections you make on yourself. This I have told you over and over again.

I can well believe that you are at a loss how to answer these young persons who want to know, forsooth, the difference between contemplation and meditation. How can it be, Sister (The Superior) puts up with them, or that you do in her absence? Sweet Jesus, what has become of humility? Stop it all, and give them books and conferences treating of the virtues, and tell them that they must set about practising them. Later on they can talk about high things—for by the exercise of true and solid virtue light comes from Him who is the Master of the humble, and whose delight it is to be with souls that are simple and innocent. At the end of all, when they have become Angels, they may talk as the Angels do. As to prayer, be at peace and do not attempt anything beyond keeping yourself tranquilly near Our Lord. This too I have often told you. In a word you are not to move any more than a statue can do. Your one wish has to be to give pleasure to God; now if He in His goodness shows you what you have to do, is it right for you to turn from this to do something else because this, His will, has no interest for you? You must take care not to fall into this fault, but be simple; don't think much about yourself and just do the best you can.

You have thoroughly satisfied your self-love, in writing me this paper. However, I will not return it to you, although I think that were I to do so it would be a mortification to you. Live wholly with all simplicity in God. I have a great affection for Sister Barbe Marie.* Take care of her, teach her to restrain her over anxiety, which makes her so eager for her own advancement and for that of everybody else.

XX.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY.
January, 1617.

Truly, my dearest little one, you give me extreme pleasure by writing so fully and so simply. Always do so. I have shown your letter to his Lordship, who is very fond of you. God will be with you and all will go well. Never doubt but that divine Providence will guide and support you in all things, if you give yourself wholly into Its hands. Employ such little talents as you possess faithfully, and they will increase. For the rest what a pity it is that we

* Madame la Présidente Le Blanc, who was converted from a life of worldliness by St. Francis de Sales, and became a great benefactress to the new Institute. When at Lyons she lived in the Convent like a religious, and wished to be called Sister Barbe Marie.

allow ourselves to be upset about what we are and how we perform our duties. Let us set about them with simplicity, looking unto God, trusting to His goodness, then all will be accomplished, all will be sanctified.

How consoling it is to hear of your courageous postulants! Salute all of them affectionately for me, but to your last novice I pray you to offer my heart, which I offer her to serve her and to love her perfectly in Our Lord. What you tell me in your letter of her fidelity to observance already gives me great consolation in her regard.

Oh, Saviour of my soul! how blessed it will be for her if she persevere! I exhort all our dear novices to constancy, and I beg of them to take my word for it, that their peace will be perfect if they hold fast without swerving to the observance. May they forget themselves and all things else in order to achieve thoroughly this one thing, which is of so much importance. If they aim at it always faithfully and humbly, it will bring them inestimable happiness.

Daylight is failing me, my daughter.

Your very affectionate

XXI.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
10*th April*, 1617.

MY MOST DEAR DAUGHTER,

I am sending you back our good Sister (Madame Colin). I see nothing in her that merits rejection. Her manner is a little dry, but that is natural to her, and I think she will improve, for she is most anxious to be gracious. She certainly seems to me to have, in the service of God, a well-directed heart, and a well-disposed mind. She will give you all our news and tell you about his Lordship, who, I feel sure, is altogether overworked. She has seen how he is overwhelmed with business. Grenoble was the last straw, on account of the endless letters it has entailed; they are too much for him. If only those ladies would have a little more consideration and confine their correspondence with him to what is useful, or to their spiritual needs ! I am told that some of them will be visiting you. For God's sake see if through them you cannot discretely manage to curtail unnecessary appeals to him. You know how kind he is and how he never fails to send them a reply, although we are told that if he does not greatly retrench his correspondence it will have a

very injurious effect on his health, and will shorten his days—days which are wholly at the service of God and his neighbour. This is a matter which it seems to me ought to concern everybody: so I am writing to Dijon, Chambéry, St. Catherine, and everywhere I can think of, to ask them to spare him as much as possible and only to write in cases of absolute necessity, or at least utility; for in such cases it cannot be avoided.

No doubt you perceive that I am a little disturbed, and indeed I am; for this morning I heard several things about him which have greatly upset me, and you know how valuable his life is to us—more it could not be. He will return next year to Grenoble. A great many people, and I believe half the diocese, regret it, especially M. de Boisy: but I do not, for it cannot be much prejudice to the bishopric, and is sure to be for God's glory, and he will, please God, reap a double harvest in this second visit. He greatly praises the goodness and piety of the people of Grenoble and particularly of the ladies. Poor Sister Barbe Marie arrived too late, but she made up for lost time and his Lordship has completely won her.

This woman has an excellent heart. She it is, I am told, who ought to introduce the ladies to us. Encourage her as much as possible to establish the Visitation at Grenoble. It is really very wonderful how on all sides they are asking for us, and we have

no desire to settle ourselves anywhere, except at Grenoble. Everything looks encouraging in that direction. The ladies there are enthusiastic to have a foundation. Recommend the affair to Our Lord, for it seems to me that it will be for His glory. Our dear Sister (Barbe Marie) will tell you everything. She has written to me three times since the return of his Lordship and I once to her. This is only fair, for she is not as busy as I am. She is quite devoted to you. Get a thurible made out of that beautiful cup; we often need one and have to inconvenience our neighbours by borrowing from them. Sell our watch, my child, to help to pay for the making of it. You will have to do this for we are short of money. Good Madame Colin insists on our keeping her watch, but I shall not do so on any account unless she consents to take the value of it. It keeps good time and we have much need of such a one.

My poor dear Sister, I dearly love you. Live solely for God by giving yourself up entirely to His holy will and letting it act. Indeed, I long to do likewise and I pray God to let me die if I do not love Him henceforth with all my strength. Such is the desire of the miserable little heart of your poor Mother who has the toothache, so she must stop writing as soon as she has made up her mind what answer to give Monseigneur of Bourges. Our good Bishop will come for it this evening. We seldom, I assure you, see him now. But we do not mind so

long as he can get through all his work. Would to God that I could relieve him of it !

Now this is the answer to the Archbishop of Bourges. Write to the grand-nephew as from yourself and say that if the matter is urgent we shall find great difficulty in providing Sisters, not having any yet sufficiently trained. I believe that Monseigneur intends first sending Cardinal Bellarmine's letter to the Father Rector, and afterwards to his Grace of Lyons. . . .

I can understand poor N.'s temptation. Alas ! from what I hear the poor Sister seems quite to have gone astray. God grant she may get into the right way again. In conclusion, dear daughter, I hope you will not take too much to heart what I have said about his Lordship's correspondence, I acknowledge to have written forcibly because it is doing him so much harm. Yesterday I let him know that I was going to write all round in the hope of curtailing it, and he told me that I must not do so, for he could manage very well. You understand, dearest daughter, I am not addressing myself to you, nor to any of our Sisters, for I don't wish to stop them from writing to him when they require his advice. Oh, indeed I do not ! not them, nor any one. I only mean that discretion should be used in this matter.

Adieu, my most dear daughter. I embrace you lovingly in spirit and am wholly yours in our sweet Saviour. Amen.

XXII.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1617.

I have three quarters of an hour free, my dearest daughter, and seize the opportunity to write to you. You have indeed given me very special pleasure by speaking a little of your beloved self and of your dear daughters. God be praised for all you tell me of both the one and the other. Oh! my love, if you but persevere in serving our great and gentle Redeemer with the highest part of your soul, indifferent as you say to all that presents itself, true happiness will be yours. Souls who act thus are royal souls. May the divine Majesty give you the grace of faithful perseverance.

You have done well to discontinue your retreat. I assure you I never undertake mine in the very hot weather on account of the great drowsiness which it causes. Well, if God wishes us to walk like one who is blind and groping in the dark, what does it matter? We know that He is with us.

I am surprised at what you tell me about Paris and Chalons,* we have heard nothing of it from any one else. It would be a great boon to us not to separate for a year: but the Holy will of God comes

* Projected foundations in these towns.

before all things, and grace urges us to the acceptance of it. If they send me, it will do me good to see you again.

I do not quite know what to say of Sister——*; tell me about her a little more in detail and of the effects on her of what she feels.

Consult the Rev. Father Rector and get her to speak to him herself. She should certainly use every endeavour to hide what you tell me of, and should never abandon herself to it; but if there is humility and simple obedience we need have no anxiety. You should insist emphatically upon simplicity, truth, and straightforwardness in all her actions, above all when she has these consolations. But in a word, if she possesses virtue you need fear nothing, even though they may come from the evil spirit. Nature or the imagination would seem to me more dangerous. Speak of this, I beg of you, in her presence to the Father Rector.

I assure you I am consoled to hear about little Orlandin. But the other little one, Raton, how is she going on? My daughter, you do singularly well not to keep those girls that are unsuitable. Try to win over their friends so that they may be satisfied with our own choice of subjects, even though those we choose may not have much dowry. My God! how important it is to have good subjects! I shall

* A Sister at Lyons who enjoyed great spiritual consolations. Her name is not given.

be sorry if Sister N. goes, for I think that in time she may make a good novice mistress and so relieve that daughter* whose mind is so wearied by the charge. The continuance of this weariness of hers gives me pain. Oh! my daughter, how true it is that we must be more than women to serve God above all natural humours and inclinations. Yet what happiness so to subdue nature that grace reigns in its stead! May it please the good God to assist us, for we can do nothing without His succour.

I have just written a line to M. Austrain, who begs of us to keep his daughter at least till September. We will willingly do so for his sake, but I own to you, daughter, that she is no gain to us.†

Still no news from Rome. I think His grace the Archbishop‡ would be glad to help us should this business be delayed. Beg of him, I beseech you, to push on the matter and above all by using the privileges which the Father Procurator says that he has obtained for us. It is really impossible to

* Sister Marie Aimée de Blonay.

† In another letter to Mother Favre, dated July 3rd, 1617, Saint Jane Frances writes: "The little Christine is very much frightened at the prospect of returning to her father (M. Austrain), for she knows that he does not want her, and she dislikes still more the thought of going to St. Ursula. A lady came here from Neuville some time ago, and ever since the little Austrain has desired to be sent there. She is now imploring her father to let her go to that town. Help us, I beg of you, to get rid of her quietly and with courage."

‡ Mgr. de Marquemont.

submit to anything else. I think, daughter, that you will do well to write him a humble, dignified, earnest request on the subject, for I fear the Father Procurator may be a little slow in following it up: but write as from yourself. My child, I must conclude. May God be all to you. Amen.

May His goodness be blessed. Believe me to be always devoted to you and Sister Barbe Marie and to all your daughters. . . . My child, I write in such haste that I forget half of what I want to say. Yes, indeed, most willingly will we make a chalice veil for you, but not until the very hot weather is over, for one cannot work neatly while it lasts. I do not know if we have the silks: Sister Péronne Marie says we have not, but she will write to you about it.

XXIII.

*To Mother Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Superior at Moulins. On the death of the Saint's daughter, Madame de Thorens.**

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
September, 1617.

Ah, Lord Jesus, grant that we may love Thee perfectly and Thee alone. His divine Goodness has truly pierced the depths of my heart, and I am

* Marie Aimée de Chantal was born in 1593; married, in 1609, Bernard de Sales, Baron de Thorens: died in 1617. In September of this year the young widow gave birth to a

overwhelmed with sorrow at the death of my daughter de Thorens. Yet what can I do but lovingly kiss the dear hand that has given this terrible blow? May it be blessed for ever! Indeed, this daughter was as lovable and as sensible as could be found at her age. I admired her great virtue and was consoled to see her firm resolve to dedicate herself entirely to God. O good Jesus, I did not deserve to have such a companion, and perhaps it was not good for us to have in this life such enjoyment and such contentment as she and I had in one another's society. So she is happy in the sovereign good which I have always desired for her, and God has surrounded my affliction with so many mercies and favours that trying to forget myself in my righteous sorrow I bless and thank Him for a grace which I dearly prize.*

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daughter at the Visitation Monastery, Annecy, where she happened to be staying, and was unexpectedly taken ill. The infant only lived to receive baptism, and Marie Aimée died two days later, having made her profession in the Order on her deathbed. St. Francis de Sales, who received her vows, said he had never seen so holy a death.

* The rest of this letter has been cut off.

XXIV.

To M. de Neuchèze, the Saint's nephew.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
November 6th, 1617.

I feel sure, my dearest nephew, that, alas ! you must already know of the death of my dear one.* Five days after her decease we announced the news to Mgr. of Bourges,† but I fear the letters may have been lost. It has truly, my child, been a great grief to me to be deprived of the presence of this dear, amiable daughter, but with all my heart I adore and embrace the divine will which has sent me this sorrow. There is much to console me in her happy and holy death, while I am almost in despair at the thought of the state of soul of your cousin.‡ So miserable am I about it that I do not know which way to turn, if not to the Providence of God, there to bury my longings, confiding to His hands not only the honour but even the salvation of this already half lost child. Oh ! the incomparable anguish of this affliction ! No other grief, my dearest nephew, can come near to it. If it were not that I am tied

* The Saint's daughter, Madame de Thorens.

† Archbishop of Bourges, brother of St. Jane Frances. M. de Neuchèze was Vicar-General and Chancellor of his Diocese.

‡ The Saint's son, Celse Benigne.

down here by a violent ague I would have already set out to be with him. I am asking him to come to me: if he does not, I beseech Mgr. of Bourges to find some pretext for visiting him, and for remaining with him till he comes to Nantua. Alas! he must be helped. I implore of you to do all you can in the matter. I can say no more. I am overwhelmed with sorrow, and my tears blind me. Obtain for him the prayers of all those good souls who walk steadily in the fear of God. My salutations to all the household. My dearest nephew, may His goodness grant you all blessings.

Believe me always your humble aunt and servant,

Sister J. F. Frémyot of the Visitation.

XXV.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
25th November, 1617.

This severe mortification which the good N. has given you is, my dearest daughter, the fruit of the holy cross. Ah! may God grant us the grace to profit by every mortification that He sends us. You are indeed blessed; for see how the divine Saviour lays on you burden upon burden. May His goodness give you His holy strength. He will do so, daughter,

for with your whole soul you have given yourself into the arms of divine Providence, and you have no other arms to bear you up and no other breast on which to repose in love save His. Abide there as a gentle dove in all simplicity and tranquility, not making account of your afflictions but looking only at the *Heart* of Him who has sent them to you.

Here we have truly shed many tears and prayed much for our dear one who is taken from us.* I have, however, much consolation; for could there have come a greater happiness to this pure and innocent soul than to meet her Saviour? Rejoice in her repose, my dearest daughter.

In order not to lose this opportunity of writing to you I am doing so without having given myself time to look over your letters again. Believe me, daughter, that if we are faithful to our vocation, and if in our little efforts we seek only the pure glory of God, His majesty will raise us up.

His Lordship wishes us to make another attempt before sending to Rome M. de Sainte-Catherine, who will be an admirable agent. God will help us, daughter, but we must keep lowly and patient and let ourselves be trampled under foot. His Lordship hopes that this new petition, supported by our Rules and the testimonials, will settle the matter. If the Archbishop thinks well to write a new letter of recommendation, from himself, to this gentleman

* Madame de Thorens, the Saint's daughter.

who is acting for him, it is quite as it should be, so long as this gentleman acts in unison with the Father Procurator of the Barnabites. But to ask him to send these attestations to the house of Lyons would, I think, be loss of time, as they have already been sent here. The Prince, on his side, has heard that the matter is being taken up warmly. Ah ! well, we have done what we can, and the success of it we must leave to the Providence of God and ask Him to guide and fashion this work according to His holy will. I hope we shall have some news in a few weeks.

His Lordship left us yesterday, and he asked me to send you his apologies for not having written to you, but he will write from Grenoble. He is absolutely overwhelmed with business. We spoke of our vow of obedience, and he believes it to be pleasing to God. He asked me how you bore that sharp mortification; but alas ! I could not tell him.

Yes, my dear daughter, we read the Catechism to the Sisters four times a week,* and if any one wants to know over and above what is in the book I check her, saying that she and I must submit our understandings to what we read without questioning

* St. Jane Frances' insistence on the simple Catechism instructions was peculiarly applicable to the time in which she lived, for the Jansenist heresy, added to the errors of Protestantism, gave rise to a subtle and questioning attitude of mind, and women, misled by their masters in error, set themselves up as Doctors in the new heretical schools of learning.

beyond, and this I find does much good, for such as we are very ignorant.

Thank you a thousand times for the beautiful wax candles. They are most acceptable, but one lasts for a whole year. We have never seen the blessed grains of incense.

Please forward the packet from Dôle at once, and securely. There is one from his Lordship from Paris. My darling, I am wholly yours and salute you all.

This St. Catherine's Day.

XXVI.

*To Madame de la Fléchère.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1617.

Oh ! may our most good and sweet Saviour be the strength and life of your soul, which is dear to me in very truth beyond all others, with, as you know, one

* In writing to a mutual friend, M. Philippe de Quoex, St. Francis de Sales says of Madame de la Fléchère: " With the exception of Madame de Chantal I do not think that I have ever met in any woman a soul stronger, a mind more reasonable, a humility more sincere." Madame de la Fléchère lived at Rumilly, and was a lifelong friend of St. Jane Frances, to whom she gave her château for a Visitation foundation, which Convent her daughter Françoise de la Fléchère in later years governed. Madame de la Fléchère was received into the Order on her deathbed.

There are no less than sixty letters extant from St. Francis de Sales to Madame de la Fléchère.

exception, which does not bear comparison. Ah! my Sister, let us by faithful obedience press forward, enlarging our love for this all lovable Saviour. No, we have it not in our power to render Him a service, we are of too small account for that, but in the name of His Goodness let us do all we can to please Him, depending on Him, and on His Providence, so that it may be our sole support. I have no time to write, but I must send you this line to content my own heart and to salute yours. Adieu, and good morning, my Sister all dear to me.

XXVII.

To Sister Paule Jéronyme de Monthoux, Mistress of Novices at Annecy.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

GRENOBLE, 1618.

I have received all your letters, my poor dear daughter; they came in two sets and you have had

* Sister Paule Jéronyme de Monthoux de Annemasse was the first Superior of the foundation of Nevers, 1620, and in 1625 of that of Blois. Her biographer, Mother de Chaugy, tells us that in the houses she founded the virtues of simplicity, poverty, and humility were so successfully implanted by her that it could truly be said: "The workman is recognized in the perfection of his work." She died at Blois in 1661, where her memory was held in such veneration that a tombstone was erected in her honour, half of which tombstone was in the Nun's choir and half in the secular chapel, in order thus to satisfy the devotion of the people.

replies to the first five, but I still have four by me with questions to answer.

There is no doubt whatever that the novices should have recourse to their Mistress in every matter, which the Rule says they are to treat with her, and it is but fitting that they should be as exact as possible on this point. Sister Assistant should give her instructions through you: for to act otherwise would be very prejudicial to them.

Yes, you do well to tell me the more important things, but you do wrong to call me a Saint. Take it to confession, and never do it again. My God! I am nothing but a sink of miseries.

You are right to devote yourself as much as possible to your duties in the novitiate. The body is indeed a poor thing, yet be careful to do nothing to injure your health. May God bless your remedies, though I very much doubt their curing you: however, in all things we must look solely for His good pleasure. You are quite wrong, my daughter, in thinking that Sister Assistant is not altogether open with you. Do not make such reflections and don't hesitate about taking your own line. Has not good M. —— the Senator been right? Remember me most affectionately and respectfully to him. Meantime I am very much concerned about your illness. You ought to consult the doctor and do whatever he tells you. Salute the good man cordially for me.

How is it the infirmarian never gives me one word of news? Well, my dear, I am very fond of her all the same. I beg of her to gain the mastery over that heart of hers so that she may train herself to gentleness and simple observance; however, I will tell this dear daughter, Marie Adrienne (Fichet), of this myself. I am glad that you are employing little Sister Françoise Marguerite (Favrot). Test her well so that she may advance in the virtues of religion.

If these dear novices hold fast to all that is marked down for them, and I entreat them to do so, they will make great progress. Do not be afraid to write quite candidly to me; letters are slow but sure in coming. I wish you could be a little clearer and more detailed in speaking of the causes which prevent the Superior from being quite fitted for her office; I thought they were exterior rather than interior. Ah! what a pity that our negligence should be of such prejudice to the service of our good God. Write openly and walk faithfully in uprightness, simplicity, and great gentleness, bearing with your neighbour, and supporting her without stint. Seek God in all things and be faithful to Him. He looks to the intention. Speak out boldly, with entire confidence to our good M. Michel; he is a good and sincere man. Adieu, my daughter. May the great Jesus make you all His own. Amen.

XXVIII.

To M. Michel Favre, Confessor to St. Francis de Sales, and to the Religious of the Visitation at Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

GRENOBLE, 1618.

Most truly, good Father and dear son, do I long for leisure to write as my heart dictates to you, but it is impossible. My feelings towards you are those of a mother, and greatly have you consoled me by your kindness in telling me how God has made known His will to those two dear sisters who aspire to Him and find their rest in His paternal bosom. It gives me ineffable consolation, seeing that I myself have this same attraction, but I should like to know the very words that were communicated to them so that I may feed my soul upon them. This I say from my heart. Give me then this satisfaction, and do you also nourish yourself with this sacred manna. Truly having this, how can we seek elsewhere for other place of security and rest ?

Alas ! dear Father, how pitiable are our infirmities and imperfections ! These two Sisters appear to me to be unduly observant of one another. They have this defect by nature, and I think it better that I should not tell them of it, lest they suffer from jealousy, both having so much affection for me and such a desire to please me; but if you put it before

them and induce them to be more simple, cordial, and open with one another that is all that is needed to set matters right, for I plainly see that each fears to do wrong. Sister Assistant, who seems to me the least in fault, ought to divert Sister N.'s mind, and be trustful and more companionable, compassionately bearing with her, and in this way draw her out of her melancholy. That is how I should act, and by so doing I have often relieved and cured souls: warming their hearts with confidence, talking over matters with them quite openly, while consulting them as if I had need of their advice, and trusting them; yet referring neither to their state of melancholy, nor to the subjects on which they philosophize; neither to their difficulties nor to the concerns of their neighbour. In a word, let these sisters act as charity will teach them, if they but ask Our Lord. For, as our very dear Lord * said to me yesterday, "It is to the humble souls that the divine Goodness gives true wisdom."

Verily, if there is any lack of conformity to the teachings of our Institute it is most improper that the sister novices should know of it. This is a thing of importance, and is too serious to be dealt with merely as we may feel inclined. The Mistress should lead the Novices according to the ordinary exercises of the house, and if on some occasion she differs in opinion as to these, she should communicate with the Superior, and learn from her how to act. But

* St. Francis de Sales.

for ordinary things, when the sisters who are under the charge of the Mistress come to speak to the Superior of their interior state and their difficulties she should, before answering, ask them if they have spoken to their Mistress and what she said on the subject. If their Mistress has wisely instructed, let her confirm what the Mistress has said, and encourage them to follow her direction; if, on the contrary, the Mistress has led them astray she ought not to let the novice know it, but put her imperceptibly on the right way, and then go herself to the Mistress, talk the matter over with her, instructing her, and instilling into her a desire to serve the Sisters affectionately. To me it seems always better, when necessary, to nourish the esteem and confidence of the novices for their Mistress. I should like the Superior to speak to them as far as possible only through her, except when the Rule ordains otherwise. But I have already written so much about this that I hope it will be done; for I certainly see that our Sister Assistant has an excellent heart. She must be encouraged to get out of herself, and to seek the advancement and repose of the Sisters with simplicity and integrity: only speaking to them for this end, and to console them: for sometimes for our own satisfaction we have an awkward way of teasing and worrying others by inopportunely returning to a subject which we should never do if we gave ourselves time to reflect.

I write to you as to a trusty friend. Manage it all, very dear Father, as you think best. It seems to me that if you do it as coming from yourself it will be better received than if they thought you had complained to me, or than if I said it myself.

Certainly this life is full of mortifications, therefore it is necessary to keep ourselves above it, looking for a better life in which you will clearly see how sincerely I am,

Yours, etc.

XXIX.

To Sister Anne Marie Rosset, Assistant at Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

GRENOBLE, 1618.

It will be a great comfort to you, my very dear Sister, to see His Lordship,* and to hear that all the people here expect to become more fervent in the service of Our Lord by means of this house. God grant it may be so ! What a consolation it is to hear that Sister Paule Jéronyme is fulfilling so well her very important charge. I hope all our dear Sisters will by a faithful and strict observance of our holy Rules advance every day in the way of Our Lord. To this fidelity, in the name of our sweetest Saviour, I exhort them, and I embrace them all in spirit with true and most sincere love. They should continue as the Rule teaches, and with

* St. Francis de Sales left Grenoble to return to Annecy just at this time.

earnestness, to pray for the health and the growth in holiness of his Lordship. And let them neither forget us, nor the other new and dear foundations that are being planted here and there by the hand of Our Lord; for these ought to be as dear to us as our own, since it is the divine Will that we dwell in perfect union of heart, as by the grace of God we do. Salute all our friends for me, especially dear Madame de la Valbonne, not forgetting my poor old Sister Anne Jacqueline, nor my friends the workmen, for whom I have a great liking.

XXX.

To Sister Paul Jéronyme de Monthoux, Mistress of Novices at Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

GRENOBLE,
26th April, 1618.

MY POOR JÉRONYME,

I know all about your little difficulties with good Sister Assistant. You were like two children, but I see by your last letter you are now simple and frank as children ought to be with one another. What pleasure this gives me! It is just how I desire to see the heart of my dearest little Jéronyme. You must keep it up and make no reflections whatever on the past. As it helps you so much to tell me about your troubles, do so, my daughter, for I am very glad to know them. You will have to be very

very generous in bearing with yourself and with others. Certainly, speak out fearlessly, in a spirit of charity and cordial confidence, to Sister Assistant of all you think proper. God be praised for the satisfactory way in which your dear novices are getting on. You should be continually helping them to advance, but do it gently, and bear with the little weaknesses which are in some. Yes, the Mistress can speak to them when necessary at their assembly and can send a young professed sister to fetch her work. Their letters ought to be given to her, who can doubt it? She can also speak to the novices during great silence but not without necessity. Should the number in the novitiate be considerable you must, in a spirit of charity, take what time you think necessary to satisfy them. I have a great affection for you, child. No, no; you must not say to the Sister Assistant, "Our Mother would not do that," unless it be in council, and then only if necessary and with great respect.

XXXI.

To Madame de la Fléchère.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

BOURGES,
2nd February, 1619.

Only one word, my dearest Sister, for it is not long since I wrote to you, and I await good news of you. My own, thank God, is good. Our little house goes

on peaceably, its good odour increasing. As to my children, I hope my daughter's marriage with M. de Foras will soon be arranged, and that she will settle in Burgundy.*

My son† gives me as keen a sorrow as ever a mother could suffer—the cause I will tell you when we meet. He is at court, brave and gallant as he can be, and they tell me, that he is resolved to conduct himself well and to make his fortune. My own wish is that he should do so with our good Prince, but I know not what he will do. My dear Father will help him. I am overwhelmed with letters that have to be answered, so I must conclude. O, my very dear Sister, may the great Jesus be our only love! Amen.

* This marriage never took place, for, though St. Jane Frances desired it, Françoise could not make up her mind to accept the gentleman.

† Celse Benigne, in whose character good and bad qualities were so mingled that he was at once the joy and the anguish of his mother, each time he risked the life of both his soul and body by the unfortunate duels in which he was so often engaged, nearly broke her heart. In order to avoid the seductions of Paris and the dangerous influence of his friends, the Saint was anxious to have him attached to the Court of Savoy, but her project did not find favour with the young Baron.

XXXII.

To Mother Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Superior at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
July 9th, 1619.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

This is only a line to announce the arrival of a good young lady* whom his Lordship and I are sending to you. She needs a home to retire to, and

* The lady so charitably recommended to Mother de Bréchard was Mademoiselle de Morville (Madame du Tertre). Left a widow at twenty-two, she had long before given herself up to a life of vanity and worldly pleasure. Her parents, anxious to safeguard her honour and the future of her children, procured for her an introduction to St. Francis de Sales, who was then in Paris. The result of this acquaintance was that Madame du Tertre quickly renounced her unedifying life and asked to be admitted into a Visitation Monastery, not as an aspirant to religious life but as a secular benefactress.

Thinking it desirable to remove her to a distance from Paris, where the temptations to return to her former life might prove too strong for one so weak and so recently converted, St. Francis arranged with her family and with Mother de Chantal to ask Mother de Bréchard to give her a home in her convent. His solicitude was ill repaid. This volatile and mischievous young woman brought endless bitterness to his heart, and to that of St. Jane Frances, while she was the source of misery and contention in the community in which she lived. In due time, acting upon the advice of their holy Founder, who was ever too hopeful in his views about Madame du Tertre, she was allowed to make her profession, but she soon relapsed into her former

ardently desires to find it with us. Now, as we cannot have her here, we hope you will welcome her and look after her lovingly and charitably. She is a lady of quality and can give a good pension. She will not come to you for a fortnight, so that you may have time to get everything suitably ready for her. See that she has a little room with a very neat and comfortable bed and all things as we are accustomed to have them. Adieu, she will give you all our news. Do not expect his Lordship for the clothing ceremony. Alas ! this good and dear Father feels far from well. Pray for him. I wrote to you the other day.

XXXIII.

To Mother Péronne Marie de Châtel, Superior at Grenoble.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1619.

You ask me, my dear daughter, if we are poor. Yes, indeed we are, but I hardly ever give it a thought. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of God remains eternally as the foundation of our hope. He has said that if we seek His kingdom and His justice all the rest shall be added unto us.

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disedifying and uncontrolled manner of living, thereby becoming the cause of great suffering to the Institute. A letter of St. Jane Frances' shows that her repentance at the end was genuine, and that she died happily in peace with God.

I believe Him, and I trust in Him. The extreme necessity in which we sometimes find ourselves gives us opportunities of practising holy confidence in God and rare perfection. Truly we already see how wise it is to adhere to Him and to hope in Him against all human hope, for our foundation has been a thousand times more successful than we dared to anticipate.

XXXIV.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
September 29, 1619.

What a great consolation for you, my very dear daughter, to have the joy of a little visit from our dearest Father ! It is such a relief that he is out of Paris, where the epidemic* is so bad that his departure was a delight to me. Although it sur-

* We read in the inedited "Foundations of the First Monastery of Paris": "In the years 1619 and 1620 God permitted a terrible plague to break out in Paris. Terror drove away not only the court but almost the entire population, who sought safety in flight. So deserted did this great city become that we are told the grass grew in the streets. As might be expected in such circumstances, the alms upon which our newly established Community subsisted entirely ceased, and to add to our misfortunes we were surrounded by infected houses. All day long we could hear the tinkle of the little bell that announced the passing of the death waggon in front of the house."

rounds us do not fear for us, daughter, only pray earnestly that we may accomplish the most holy will of our good God. I have every confidence that nothing will happen but what is His good pleasure, and what pleases Him pleases us. So if it is His will I shall often write to you, and I will address all my letters to his Lordship, who has desired me to keep him well acquainted with our news. I wish you could find out the best address for our letters and tell me also how you will send yours. It would be well to take advantage of M. Rousselet when he returns to this town, for he has a brother at Lyons.

I do not give you any news, dear daughter, for I have commissioned my nephew de Boisy to do it; and besides, you know it is a thing which is distasteful to me. One thing only is necessary—to possess God, and for this I have a burning desire. This alone is happiness. All the rest is mere smoke. Cling then with constancy to this holy aim. Write to me of your interior state: you will be reviewing it now.* O God, how I love that heart of my great and dear daughter! I long to see it generous, pure, perfect, in a word united in a holy union with the *Heart* of its amiable and adorable God. Adieu, my daughter, a thousand good mornings to you and to your dear flock. I do not know if his Grace of Lyons has returned: he will mayhap want to delay

* The autumn has always been the season appointed for the annual Retreats of the Sisters of the Visitation.

the change of your congregation into a monastery.* It is, however, expedient that it should be done before you are taken away. His Lordship will speak to you of this. But it must be managed very tactfully. One word in conclusion. Test your daughters well before their profession.

Adieu, my daughter. I am always yours in Our Lord. You know this. May He be blessed! St. Michael's Day.

XXXV.

To Sister Marie-Avoye Humbert, at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS, 1619.

I want you to know, my dear little daughter, what a great consolation your letter has been to me. You have portrayed your interior state with much simplicity, and believe me, little one, I tenderly love that heart of yours and would willingly undergo much for its perfection. May God hear my prayer, and give you the grace to cut short these perpetual reflections on everything that you do. They dissipate your spirit. May He enable you instead to use all your powers and thoughts in the practice of such

* The Archbishop of Lyons, Mgr. de Marquemont, although the first to urge that the Visitation should have enclosure and solemn vows, was the last to put in force the Bull erecting it into a Religious Order. He held back in the hope of inducing the house at Lyons to undertake the reciting of the great Canonical Office.

virtues as come in your way. How happy would you then be, and I how consoled! Make a fresh start in good earnest, my darling, I beg of you. For faults of inadvertence and suchlike, humble yourself in spirit before God, and after that do not give them another thought. You will do this, will you not, my love? Ah, do! I ask it through the love you bear to your poor mother. For the rest, say out boldly everything in your letters; they always console me. Let nothing worry you. Always yours in sincerity. Pray much for me. May the sweet Jesus accomplish in you His holy will!

XXXVI.

To the Sisters of the Visitation of Bourges.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS,
October 3, 1619.

MY BELOVED DAUGHTERS,

The affection I bear you is my only motive in striving to serve and console you: I need no other spur, for that one is boundless. But God does not intend that we should see each other for the present, and we willingly submit our desires to His holy will. Meanwhile, let us prepare ourselves by a greater fidelity to observance to profit by the occasion should He arrange a meeting for us.

Above all things, dear daughters, dwell together,

I beseech of you, in a great and magnanimous love of His holy will, and a gentle mutual support of one another, which will ravish the HEART of the sovereign Goodness: for our good Saviour has said that it is by our love for one another that we shall be recognized as His disciples.

No leisure for more—I recommend myself to your prayers. May God dwell habitually in your midst and heap upon you His choicest graces!

Yours always in Him. May He be blessed!

XXXVII.

To the Sisters of the Visitation of Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS,
December 14th, 1619.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTERS,

We are now beginning a new year, and with my whole heart I come to beg a favour of you. For the sake of the honour and privilege of being daughters of Our Lady will you not grant it to me? for all the affection of which I am capable is bound up in the asking. It is this, to make a strong and effectual resolve to walk in the way of exact observance, obeying simply, in all humility and meekness.

In the name of God, let not self-conceit be seen amongst you, nor desire of offices, nor of high places;

but rather, in the knowledge of your own weaknesses and miseries, cultivate a great love of humiliations, of self-abasement, and of all things lowly. Never use sharp words one to another. Holy gentleness, cordiality, and union of heart should reign instead among you, so that a gracious affability may season all your words and actions, and no shadow of repugnance ever show itself. Do not think about whether you are loved more or less than another. Kill such little foxes, I pray you, for they will steal away the peace of your hearts. We should never desire to be loved, but believe that we get as much affection as God sees good for us.

Never make questions as to whom the charges are given; never desire them. The divine will ought to be the rule of our will and enough for us. Now, my dear Sisters, give the Holy Virgin, our Lady, the pleasure of seeing you serve our sweet Master, her dear Son, by being faithful to these little counsels which I give on their part, and in their presence. I ask this of you through the infinite goodness of the Son and Mother, while I beseech them to grant you a superabundance of graces and their eternal benediction. Amen.

XXXVIII.

To Mother Péronne-Marie de Châtel, Superior at Grenoble.*

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
January 13th, 1620.

Ah ! how is it, my darling, my dearest daughter, that you expect a severe letter from me ? I tell you candidly, and glory be to God for it, your heart is too good to deserve scolding, and even if it were not, I have no inclination to scold. In a letter which I received from his Lordship speaking of the houses (of the Institute) that he has visited, he says: " To speak quite openly, at Grenoble I have found one who is a Superior altogether after my own heart." Now, you may imagine, my daughter, what good it did my heart to hear this. Yes, indeed I love you very dearly, but I can give you no better advice than to walk straight on in your own path, which is a good one, without turning to right or left. You are wonderful in the way you complain of yourself. Remember, that if God permits you to be so unfaithful, He allows these little negligences so that

* Such was the reputation for fervour of the Monastery of Grenoble that many distinguished members of the Society of Jesus, and of other Orders, spoke of it as a " Furnace of Prayer," and a " School of Virtues," but the humility of Mother de Châtel hid from her the great work that God was accomplishing through her means in her own community.

you may always have wherewith to humble yourself. When God consoles you receive His consolations quite simply, accepting alike good and ill. In a word, my daughter, you must unite yourself to God in everything, and by everything, and lead your daughters in the same way. As to a spiritual Father, nothing more can be done. You must continue to have patience for a little longer and God will provide you with one. Meanwhile be all things to your daughters, and then all will go well. It is a great consolation to hear that they are so good. Oh! Lord Jesus, pour down Thy graces upon this chosen company. Pray much for us. The choice of a house here depends upon his Lordship, and we are at our wits' end to find a suitable one; however, we hope to be settled this summer. Well, my daughter, God alone suffices; were He our only consolation, and did we never wish for any other, how happy we should be! Let us hold to this, for nothing else matters. Adieu, my love. Pray, and get prayers for my children, I beseech you. You are most truly, believe me, the very dear daughter of my heart.

XXXIX.

To Mademoiselle de Chantal.

[The Saint tells her daughter of M. de Toulonjon's proposal of marriage.]

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1620.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Let us bless God who takes such care of His children who trust in Him. His divine Providence is arranging for you something that I think you will like: and for my part, it is altogether desirable to me. Your brother is going to see you and he will tell you about the gentleman,* whom you do not know but who has seen you. He is our neighbour at Monthelon, a fine straightforward, brave gentleman, rich too, and with a very well-appointed house. We are extremely pleased at the honourable way in which he comes to make his courtship. Tell me promptly and candidly, I beg of you, my dear daughter, if your affections are free, for if so, and that you continue as reasonable and submiss ve as you promised me to be in your last letter, you will be happier than you or I could have dreamt of. For the love of God, my darling, put your whole heart entirely into the hands of God and don't let yourself be prejudiced by any foolish talking, or taken up with silly thoughts and apprehensions. Let us act,

* M. de Toulonjon.

for your happiness is dearer to us than it is to yourself.

If it please the great God to bring this affair to a satisfactory termination, verily you will be happy and well pleased, for this gentleman is all that I could desire for you. All the rest I leave for your brother to tell you. Do not speak about this matter to anyone, but pray and send me your answer as soon as you can. Now don't fail to do so. Write by two routes and promptly. In fifteen days I shall send to the coach office for your answer, and I beg of you to have it there for me. As regards other business, I have already asked you to urge M. Coulon to sell Foretz. Be sure to see to this; for we must have three thousand crowns in ready money, as I have promised that sum. Arrange that M. Coulon pays you in full, at latest within six months; urge him, and be careful to see that there is no unnecessary expenditure. I write in the greatest haste. God bless you, my child. Unite with me in praising and blessing Him always. I shall settle things to your best advantage, so have no fear, dearest daughter.

XL.

To Mother Jeanne Charlotte de Bréchard, Superior at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
March 12th, 1620.

I know well, my dearest Sister, how deeply you felt the news of my son's accident,* for your heart is so full of love for me that all my sorrows are sorrows to you. I did not mention it when writing because I did not think of it. God has given me the grace not to be very much upset by this news, which was broken to me bluntly enough. Indeed, it was an unlooked for happening, and one in which a wiser man than he could not have refused to come to the assistance of an injured friend. Such is the way of the world. All the same he got into trouble about it, without, however, being too much inconvenienced, and the affair is now all settled. The good gentleman whom the sergeant tried to take away was badly wounded and has not yet recovered; but thank God all the rest are on their feet again.

Your prayers will be of use to my son and he needs them. We are thinking of marrying my daughter†

* The young Baron de Chantal had just been compromised, not in a duel, but in one of those sudden assaults so common at that period, in which he took part in order to defend a friend who had been attacked.

† Françoise de Chantal.

to M. de Toulonjon, the brother of Mme. de la Poivrière. The matter has been proposed to us through M. Dautesy. My nephew d'Effran and my son know him well, and they consider it a very advantageous match for my daughter and advise me not to refuse. The gentleman declared his intentions most honourably and with all deference. He is a frank, honest man.

Do not speak of this for the present, my love, but pray about it, for I fear my daughter's irresolution. She is a painful anxiety to me.

Our M. Lefevre has not come; if you can tell me where he is staying I would invite him, or indeed beg of him to come here; however, the chancellor is very likely to be with the King.

The girl I proposed to you as a lay sister lives near Moulins, but if you have others whom you yourself know, do not trouble about her, it does not signify. Your plan of treating with the Sisters for the Nevers foundation is, I consider, admirable. They have done the same at Orleans. But, my dear friend, see that everything is on a very secure footing and only treat with good subjects, such as you know they ought to be. For the rest visit and find out all about the place they propose selling to you before you purchase it, and arrange, if you can, as they have done at Orléans, to purchase in case it proves suitable, and if not desirable as a permament residence, to rent it. What you tell me about the

Carmelites wishing to take it keeps me in a state of uncertainty, for they are extremely prudent and have very competent people to help them. But the good Father of our Sisters (Bonsidat) can do much with the advice of the Jesuits. I think, or rather I fear, they may be very glad to put us off now that the Carmelites are coming. Indeed, we must put the affair into the hands of God and follow good counsel as you are doing. You should make quite certain of the consent of the gentlemen of Nevers and of the authorities of the town before taking the Sisters there; for this reason we must obtain it, at latest, by Easter, as it is so far from Nessy, and I think those for Orleans will be sent by Pentecost. By the way, you have not told me if they have sent you a mistress of novices; but as dear Sister Marie Hélène (de Chastellux) is doing so well I think you might do with her. Certainly, my child, if the Superior of Nevers is from Nessy that is enough. Don't urge Mgr. of Lyons, but let him do as he likes. Your spiritual Father can give permission for the departure of the Sisters.

You see I am writing in breathless haste. We are always overwhelmed with work here; but to-day it is because I have a heavy cold for which I was bled yesterday. You know how subject I am to these colds, but you need not be in the very least anxious about me. Would to God, my dearest friend, that you kept as well as I do, and that they took as much

care of you! It distresses me that you have no one to look after you. May God in His goodness provide you with someone! Take what care you can of yourself, I beseech you.

I have had no news of his Lordship for a long time, but I know he is quite well. Thank God, I think he will soon go to Piedmont. M. de Boisy is coadjutor in the bishopric of Geneva. No more time. I salute your dear family and your hostess. I cannot write more. Good-bye, my dearest and best of daughters, for whom I have such a special love. Urge on your daughters gently in the way of holy tranquillity and recollection. Amen.

XLI.

To Mademoiselle de Chantal.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS, 1620.

Listen to this, daughter dear. M. de Toulonjon finds himself free for eight or ten days, and off he is going to know whether you consider him too old to please you; for as regards everything else he is in hopes of finding favour with you. As for me, to be candid with you I see nothing to find fault with in him, and even nothing more to wish for. I never before remember feeling such satisfaction about a temporal matter. Our Lord has given me this feeling. It is not so much this gentleman's good

nature and good birth that attracts me as his mind, disposition, candour, his good sense, uprightness, and reputation. In a word, my dear Françoise, we may well bless God about this affair. In gratitude to Him, my child, you should try to love and serve Him better than you have ever done and to let nothing whatsoever prevent you from frequenting the sacraments and from practising humility and gentleness. Take the Devout Life for your guide and it will lead you safely. Do not lose your time over such little vanities as jewels and clothes. You are about to possess them in abundance, but, dear daughter, never forget that we should use the good things God gives us without being attached to them, and everything that the world esteems should be looked upon in this light. Henceforth, let your ambition be to be adorned with honour and modest discretion in the position into which you are about to enter. Indeed I am gratified that your relatives and I have arranged this marriage without you. It is thus that the wise act, and I should like always to be your counsellor. Besides, your brother, who has a good judgment, is charmed with this alliance. M. de Toulonjon it is true is some fifteen years your senior, but, my child, you will be far happier with him than if you married a foolish, inconsiderate young scamp such as are the young men of to-day. You are marrying a man who is nothing of all this, who never gambles, but who has passed his life at

court and in the battlefield with honour and who has a high appointment from the King. You will not have the good judgment with which I credit you if you do not receive him cordially and frankly. Do so, my daughter, with a good grace, and be assured that God has you in His mind and will not forget you if you throw yourself tenderly into His arms, for He takes care of those who trust in Him.

XLII.

To Sister Marie-Marthe Legros, at Bourges.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1620.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER,

I understand perfectly, and have never doubted but that your intention was upright. Don't be afraid to tell me what you think it your duty to mention, but, my love, do not worry yourself about such things, if they are not manifest faults. Leave them to the coadjutrix, who ought to do her duty in all humility and cordiality. Tell her from me that I will do all she asks me, but I cannot write to her this time. For God's sake observe the rules punctually, and have all of you but one heart and one soul, and so will your love be perfect in Our Lord. Give my affectionate love to my poor fat Sister M. M., and dear little M. Louise; both are in my heart. I wish all happiness to the two dear

daughters Marie-Françoise and Anne-Marie; I pray God to give them and all of you the virtue of holy obedience, the mother of all virtues.

Be sure to tell the dear professed that they have a bigger share of my heart than they dream of. But as to the reception to the habit of Sister —— this child has not the conditions marked, why then have they given her their votes? They do not set sufficient value on fidelity to the Rule. Votes should never be given in the hope of amendment, you should see the improvement first before giving the habit, and the same with regard to Sister C. M.: she should not make her profession at the end of the year. Why! in truth she has only really conducted herself as a novice for six months, so she ought, I consider, to be kept back, and this will prove her perseverance and bring home to her that she does not deserve to be professed, and that with humility and submission, such matters should be left in the hands of the Superior, and the Sisters. By this prolongation of her trial, her virtue and her dispositions will be tested.

May God in His goodness give you all His spirit, and the grace to weigh well all our Rules, so that they may be observed and followed even to the most insignificant point, for in this our happiness consists.

Adieu to you, my dear Sister, and to all our dear professed. Let us love God and accomplish His will, I beseech you, my dearly loved daughter.

XLIII.

To Madame du Tertre.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
11 *August*, 1620.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

Having a little free time I make use of it to beg of you in the name of God to accept the judgement of the Bishop of Geneva, to whom you have referred this affair, and who considers that what was so deliberately settled on the house of Nevers should remain with that house. You, my dearest daughter, ought to be indifferent about such matters so long as we give you all you desire. Why should you trouble as to what use we make of your gift since quite sufficient is provided for your maintenance? If you keep to your holy desire of living amongst us and giving yourself entirely to God you must, if you please, trust his Lordship and show that you are satisfied with his decision. As for us, we desire neither law-suit nor contention, and a hundred times would we prefer to return all you have given us rather than retain it with the least accompanying unpleasantness: for we value peace with holy poverty incomparably more than all the goods this world can give us.

The Bishop of Geneva will not disclaim what I now say to you. I am a little surprised that, since his

letters have arrived, we have received no news except that much pressure is being brought to bear on our Sisters of Nevers to induce them to return the money they have received. It is their Bishop tells me this. You understand, my very dear daughter, that if you desire to persevere, as I believe you do, you must please, now that you are acquainted with the views of his Lordship of Geneva, cease to discuss this matter.

Our poor Sisters of both houses are sorely afflicted at having to give ear to a style of conversation with which they are unacquainted—peace is more to them than such things. Let them have it, then, I pray you.

Believe me,

Always yours, etc.

XLIV.

To M. de Palierne, Treasurer of France at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS,
August 15, 1620.

SIR,

Your regard for the Bishop of Geneva and for our little Institute, together with the prudence with which you have always guided our Convent of Moulins, gives me hope that you will find a means of adjusting the opposing claims of the Bishop of Nevers and Madame du Tertre. The pregnant

arguments you put forward bear, I acknowledge, great weight, but so do those of his Lordship of Nevers. I see much to consider on both sides. Yet I tell you frankly, and it seems to me that I am not unreasonable in my opinion, that, in consideration of Madame du Tertre's resolve to live with us, what she has so freely given ought to be left with the house of Nevers: otherwise she would have to make a virtue of necessity, and this we should be sorry to oblige her to do. But I am chiefly influenced by the fact that the authorities of Nevers only gave permission for the establishment of the Convent because Madame du Tertre accompanied her petition by a promise of ten thousand crowns, which promise was followed by the actual purchase in her name of a property, and the payment of a third of the foundation money; and on the strength of this the Sisters were received. Possession was afterwards taken of the house. The Sisters were installed by the Bishop, enclosure established, and the Blessed Sacrament reserved. Since that day the Divine Office* has been continuously recited. Thus, the foundation is, as you see, completely established. How, then, can Madame du Tertre, having undertaken the financial establishment of this house, now draw back without upsetting the whole affair? For as his Lordship of Nevers has upon two occasions plainly told me, the spiritual foundation cannot exist without the temporal.

* The Little Office of Our Lady.

Do you not see, Sir, that to do what this young lady wishes would mean ruining one of our houses to ensure abundance to the other house.

My very dear brother, may I, Sir, so call you? When writing to you, I have often thought of doing so because of my sisterly confidence in, and affection for you, and because of the obligations under which you have placed me. This I say simply and frankly, though perhaps somewhat unconventionally. Allow me Sir, my very dear brother, to tell you that the property is not ours to divide. As Madame du Tertre no longer wishes to adhere to her first resolve, she may be at liberty to take back what she has given, but I do not know what justice would have to say on this point. Still, putting justice aside, the Bishop of Geneva would surely not approve of our retaining one *teston** that was not freely given. Oh! of that there is no doubt. But as she has entered amongst us, and as our house of Moulins is satisfied with the twenty thousand francs she brings, acknowledging that this sum is quite sufficient to provide the young lady with all she requires, and as the affair concerns our own houses, is it not better to follow the advice of his Lordship of Geneva and share the ten thousand crowns between the two houses? or at least leave ten thousand francs to Nevers, so that that house may not be ruined. It was upon the assurance of this from our Moulins

* An old French coin.

sisters that those of Nevers decided to go to that town. Before God, how can we possibly put into the power of the Bishop of Nevers such a favourable pretext for sending the sisters away ? Oh ! can you not see, my very dear brother, how shameful it would be, and how prejudicial to the service of God ? Although the houses are ours, and we have the principal interest in them, the agreement has been more to the advantage of this dear young lady than to us. For with her twenty thousand francs she possesses at Moulins all the privileges she could hope for were it fifty thousand, and besides, when there is just reason, in virtue of her title of benefactress, she is free to pass on to Nevers and there enjoy the same rights as are conferred on her at Moulins. This, in my opinion, is a very just arrangement and I most humbly beg of you to induce her to accept it. Use your influence with her, I beseech of you, for the honour and glory of God and of His Blessed Mother, and also for the love you bear our little Institute. Madame du Tertre desired to know the wishes of the Bishop of Geneva, and he has acceded to her request. Let her then accommodate herself to his views and live in peace. I appeal to you in the name of God, for I see no other way of settling this affair, and I own candidly that I can obtain nothing more from his Lordship of Nevers, who holds out for the full sum and writes about it in a very matter-of-fact way. I answer as God directs me, resolved through His

grace to place all in His hands and to remain in peace and submission to whatever divine Providence ordains.

I beg of our Sisters of Moulins to do whatever justice demands. Oh ! what a shame it would be to see our houses sueing one another ! A thousand times rather would I prefer to see them overwhelmed with reproaches and poverty than that this should ever happen. If, dearest brother, after all these humble petitions and arguments, Madame du Tertre and our Sisters of Moulins wish to act against those of Nevers she must do as she pleases; but we shall neither blame them nor defend ourselves, for to do so would not be the will of God, and under these circumstances I am persuaded it would be better for one or other entirely to surrender its claim. Such, too, is the opinion of his Lordship of Geneva.

Oblige me by telling our Sister, the Superior of Moulins, that I have already written to her, as by accident she may not have yet received my letter. This, that I now write to you, will also serve for good Madame du Tertre, it being all I am able for, as I have a slight indisposition which is becoming habitual with me. I have no other wish than that she should be treated sweetly and cordially with all affection as she certainly merits. But, I assure you, Nevers was entirely her own free choice: I have ample evidence of this in her letters. God only knows all that has passed on this subject. Our

poor Sister Superior may have appeared somewhat inflexible and shown how much she felt this rupture. But, dearest brother, in consideration for her position we must throw over this fault of weakness or surprise, the mantle of holy charity, that mantle which bears with all, excuses all, and hides all the defects of her children. These last lines are in confidence for your own ear only, your goodness and piety encouraging me to confide in you. I beseech of you in conclusion to use all the influence at your command in favour of peace and charity. Believe me, I am truly indifferent to everything except the glory of God.

I remain, Sir, very dear brother, with much affection,

Your humble and obliged
Sister and servant in Our Lord.

XLV.

To St. Francis de Sales.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
August, 1621.

Pray much, my incomparable Father, for the Archbishop of Bourges,* and ask our Sisters to pray

* The Archbishop of Bourges, being one of those who discovered the ambitious conspiracy hatched by Condé, Governor of Berry, for which he was arrested in September, 1616, became, upon that Prince's release several

for him. What is this storm after all in comparison with the sufferings of Our Lord in His Passion? I beseech His divine Majesty, to which I have consecrated myself, to let my brother's part in this affair serve entirely for His glory, and I doubt not but that it will be so: The doctor was thunderstruck when they told him that Mgr. of Bourges had been removed and M. N. given the Archbishopric. He speaks of nothing but the universal affection of the people of Bourges for our good Archbishop, who feels this blow though he has taken it in his usual good-natured way. You who know him can understand how detrimental the change will be to the poor and to the religious Houses, to both of whom he has been such a benefactor. Our Sisters will not be the least sufferers, for he loved them much and was extremely good to them. A word from you would be an immense consolation to him.

May the sweet Jesus fill your heart with His most pure love, and may we eternally repose in Him. Amen.

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years later, the object of his special vengeance. He obliged Mgr. Frémyot to resign his Archiepiscopal See, assigning him in compensation the abbeys of Ferrières, and Breteuil, and also the priory of Nogent-le-Rotrou.

XLVI.

To Madame de la Fléchère.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1621.

Madame, I pray that God may always be your strength, your love, and your hope, for in my littleness I have an incomparable affection for you. Eh ! but your letters, dear, best of sisters, console me, and yet I truly feel with you who bear the burden of sharp and hidden sorrows. But after all, how happy we should be to suffer such things with only the eye of God to look upon them. Truly our crosses ought greatly to raise our courage, seeing that by them we attain to a union all secret with our sweet Master, the greatness of whose sufferings nor men nor angels can ever conceive. Take comfort in this thought when pain is at its height. Still, you ought not to conceal your pain from our *Blessed Father* (but I think you do not).

We can, it seems to me, so name him, as there is a worthy ecclesiastic here who calls him *the true Father*. I am sure, dearest sister, that each day he strives after a higher perfection. Happy they who have the example of his rare virtues before them, but far happier they who imitate them ! God grant us the grace to be of this number, and may my weakness not hold me back. I shall be satisfied if

I follow him a hundred steps behind. I am very glad that your sister has the comfort of staying with you and that your son is good. May God give him the grace to persevere, and may he root all vanity out of your daughter's heart. Mine is very extravagant. It is well that she has found such a good and prudent husband. When I see her I do my best to make her sensible and to show her her mistake. I recommend her to your prayers. My son is also most extravagant, but otherwise he is brave, loveable, and esteemed at court, where the King has given him a very honourable past for one so young. But all this is vanity. I value more your remembrance of him before God than all these dignities. He is always here, I mean with the court, or in his garrison. I trust to the prayers of our Blessed Father to save these children's souls, and that is all I care about.

Adieu, dearest Sister.

XLVII.

To the Countess de Toulonjon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1621.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

The dress I am sending you is really quite perfect and is the most beautiful that can be procured. If your brother were very rich it would be

a pleasure to him to pay the bill for you, but as it is he begs of you to be satisfied with his good-will, for he has not wherewith to pay it. Be content with this dress, for it is handsome and quite sufficiently stylish, and because you so long for it I want to satisfy you. M. de Toulonjon writes that you have not a single gown except the one you are wearing. I cannot understand this, as during the last seventeen months you have had four silk dresses and the brocade costume about which you told me. What then am I to think, I pray you, dear Françoise? Oh! God bless you, my daughter; do be content and let it be seen that you are the child of parents who were altogether reasonable, peaceful, and constant in their perfect affection, and this it is that I desire for you.

I write in haste. A thousand salutations to all your dear relatives. Do not expect your brother: he cannot go to you, and I do not wish him to. You have my nephew. Courage, my child, be not a silly, frivolous girl, troubling over trifles, and letting them take up your thoughts. Urge M. de Toulonjon to send me the money for the dress. The amount of the bill is, I understand, 500 livres, and I have not got the money to pay it, so let me have it by the first opportunity, as I do not wish to remain in debt here.

God bless you, dearest Françon. I am in a great hurry.

XLVIII.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Montferrand.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

DIJON,
May, 1622.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Your letter of the 17th of March is the only one I have received; the others will no doubt come to hand later, God willing. You must not put off your departure beyond the date you mention. I do wish you were here, for it certainly does delay me not to have you. Your presence here is needed, and as the affairs of dear Mme. de Dalet are hopeless you had better come away as soon as ever you can. The house of Montferrand ought to finance your journey from the place whence you came to them, and the house of Lyons should do likewise; but your coming here is hardly more than your going to Nessy.* I shall write to the Lyons Sisters in reference to this.

We are, thank God, poor here, yet, God be praised, nothing is wanting to us. A widow of good family, discreet and genial, wants to live with us as a benefactress. She proposes giving her furniture and 2,000 crowns, besides defraying all her own expenses.

We have received two good children, and find no

* A popular name for Annecy.

lack of aspirants for our life, but the important thing is to be careful in our choice. In my opinion you will be pleased with those you will find here. Yesterday we went with Mgr. de Langres* to look for a house. It is not easy to find a suitable one, but Our Lord will help us. We are advised to bide our time and to put up with the house that adjoins this, which is sufficiently commodious for a beginning. Moreover, to the money the good lady (the benefactress) intends giving us she will add sufficient to enable us to be housed here. Then upon our leaving this house, which will be at the end of three or four years, if not sooner, she will give us the 2,000 crowns. Everybody agrees in thinking this a most advantageous offer. The worst of it is that the garden is very small: the courts are quite suitable. Dijon is very much shut in, and it is difficult to find a house to rent that will accommodate us. That in which we now are is small and has no garden or courtyard except one hardly bigger than a table. Even as I write it makes me laugh to think of it; and I must tell you besides that if we want to get a little fresh air we have to climb on the roof. Nevertheless, we are, thank God, as merry and as contented as we can be. Be on your guard, my *great daughter*,† against that

* Monseigneur Sebastian Zamet, Bishop of Langres, in which diocese Dijon was situated.

† A title given to Mother Favre by St. Francis.

dislike which you have of coming here. Overcome it, I beg of you, for everybody who knows that you are coming is delighted at the idea, and as for me, I simply cannot tell you how I am looking forward to it. Oh! what a joy to see you once more for a little while. It will do me a world of good. Who are those timorous people who say that they must not use terms of affection to me? I don't agree with them at all, neither should you. Our hearts could not stand that.

The Archbishop of Lyons is in trouble as to who will take you back. They have made a great fuss about Sister——. If our *Cadette* is removed I am afraid that house will fail. She has never been elected: see to this if you can at your deposition, and don't stop longer than just to arrange about it. Let me have news of you again before you start. What will Mme. de Chazeron's plan come to? I most affectionately salute your *successor*. It has always been a source of regret to me that I have not seen your community: none the less do I love it, and I send my warm greetings to it and to all its good friends.

With all my heart, your affectionate,

P.S.—Ask the Sisters, I beseech you, to pray hard and continually for my poor son till he is won back to Our Lord.

XLIX.

To M. de Neuchèze.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

DIJON,
June 8, 1622.

So engrossing is Paris, my dear nephew, that if I do not refresh your memory about your old aunt she runs the chance of your forgetting all about her. Yet for all that I do not think you would forget me. I have received too many proofs of your good nature for that. But, tell me, what are you doing in that great Paris amidst so many honours and such worldly luxuries ? Oh ! I beseech of you, dear child, guard yourself vigilantly on every side, lest an undue affection for these things take hold of you. My God ! how I hate them all. And am I not right, dearest nephew, since they leave no time for reflection, and no desire for eternal goods ? All is sacrificed to perishable enjoyments. For the love of God beware of them. I would have you protect your dear soul with a very watchful care, so that however abundantly you possess temporal things they may never take possession of you. Rise quickly and holily above them all. This advice goes to you direct from my heart, and as coming thence I know you will receive it. Now and always I am most affectionately desirous of obtaining for

you through the divine Goodness an abundance of blessings, all that it is in my power to procure, that you may enjoy God's grace in this life and in the next His glory. These, dearest nephew, are the wishes of her who remains always,

Your very humble aunt and servant.

P.S.—Allow me very affectionately to salute good M. Robert Dapantor* and all your household. Dear Sister Parise† took the habit on St. Claud's Day. Mgr. de Langres gave it to her and performed the whole ceremony. She sends you affectionate messages, as does likewise the deceased‡ Mother of Bourges and all that little family of nine daughters. If they dared they would all beg of you respectfully to salute on their part his Grace the Archbishop.

* Former tutor of the young Baron de Chantal.

† Sister Marie Claire Parise was the foundress of the Visitation Monastery at Dijon—a humble and fervent soul. While still a secular she asked God never to permit her to be without suffering of some kind for His love. He heard her prayer, and her life was a continual interior martyrdom, nevertheless joy and tranquility of soul never abandoned her. Having with the utmost solicitude and care established the monastery of Dijon, she was sent to Beaune, on its foundation in 1632, and there died in the odour of sanctity.

‡ A nickname given by the Saint to Sister Anne Marie Rosset when she was deposed from the Superiorship of Bourges.

L.

To Mother Anne Catherine de Beaumont, Superior of the First Monastery of Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

DIJON,
30th June, 1622.

I cannot but believe, my dearest daughter, that there is more artifice than martyrdom about our N., and I assure you I find it very difficult to think otherwise. If she were reproved, or passed over, I expect it would cure her. There will be nothing but trouble if God does not put His hand to the work. May His divine Goodness apply the remedy. I enclose her letter, and my reply. What a strange thing is this spirit of the world ! You must remain patient and firm under its hard criticism. As you will see by my answers all your letters have reached me.

It certainly is a rare thing, my child, in a large community not to find someone who is a trial, but that so many are good is a great subject of consolation. For the love of God, I pray you don't imagine that it is through your fault that others do not advance. That is not so, thank God. They will be very happy, my dearest daughter, if they follow your advice, and do as you do. In a word I am of opinion that in this (the support of feeble souls) consists in great part the cross of poor Superiors.

The strength of mind God gives you to reprimand will be of great service to them. Persevere in allowing nothing contrary to perfection. For zeal combined with gentleness is of great force in animating hearts, and the like of us women need to be perpetually egged on and kept up to the mark.

I feel I must just simply tell you the truth. All you say about yourself gives me great cause to praise God. It is all excellent. Go always, as you now do, to God alone. I had much consolation in reading your letter and above all in seeing what courage God has given you. Verily, my dear Sister, he who loves not, he who trusts not, he who rests not wholly in the arms of divine Providence must be hard as flint and altogether insensible. In these arms, then, at His mercy, let us dwell so that He may do as He pleases with us.

I cannot tell you how grateful I feel to God for the graces that I see and know you to have received, and it seems to me that for this I am under a great obligation of gratitude to Him.

Instruct, and speak continually to your daughters of the sweet, sure, abundant mercy of God towards those souls who hand themselves over to Him, trusting Him out and out. I am very glad about little de B. I think she will be a good child if she can bear mortification, but the gentleness which is practised with us will make it easy for her. Goodbye, my dearest daughter; I am truly overwhelmed

here with visits and writing. I salute all my friends and above all our poor Sisters of Villeneuve.

Show these letters to the Rev. Father. It only needs a little time to get the postulant away. We must do this, and say nothing, except that as the Chapter has not received her she cannot be kept, and we must bear the consequences patiently. God will direct all and you will draw profit from it. The good Father who brings you these letters is a great friend of our Institute, and we are under many obligations to him.

LI.

To Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre, Superior at Dijon.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

LYONS,
8th December, 1622.

MY OWN DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Here we are returned from our dear little Montferrand where I certainly found excellent souls, full of desire to advance in the perfect observance. The poor Superior* was almost broken by the dread of her charge; this she told me you already knew from herself; I have left her greatly encouraged. She truly gives me pleasure, for her judgement is good, her aspirations are good, and she possesses an exceedingly good appearance and manner (several

* Mother Marie Jacqueline Compain.

illegible lines). My daughter, perform the Office, I beg of you, as it is marked. These fancies pass. His Lordship wishes us to keep up a tone not too high, but moderate, and to sing clearly, distinctly, and evenly: as for other faults I do not know of any, unless some defect in pronunciation. I very much desire that we should observe the same manner of singing the Office in all the houses; changes I find slip in. But for the future his Lordship will mark how it is to be carried out, and then we have only to keep to what is settled. At St. Etienne they drag shockingly. By the way there is an excellent Superior there who carries out her charge with great discretion.* You know how exact she is, she fits into her office admirably. I tell her that she is in her element. Certainly all goes well in that house, and I am delighted with it. . . . Monseigneur is here,† and we see a little of him. He does not wish

* The foundation of St. Etienne had but just been made, and Mother Françoise Jéronyme de Vilette named Superior.

† "On December 8th, 1622, while King Louis XIII. was making his state entry into Lyons amidst a great display of pomp on the part of the two courts of France and Savoy, St. Francis de Sales, wishing, like a true father, to enjoy the society of his daughters, sent off all his retinue to see the fête and came by himself to the Convent parlour. There in the course of conversation with us he drew a contrast between the feast which the Church that day celebrated, and the political feast the town was keeping in honour of the King's entry.

"Our worthy Mother de Chantal, who was present, was overjoyed to meet again the father of her soul, but this

us to leave yet; this I think is out of consideration for the Archbishop of Bourges. Sister Marie de Valence is also here. She is undoubtedly a most humble and simple soul, without any constrained or peculiar ways, and her little daughter is the same.

I pray you, my child, manage if you can to get the letters from Madame de Puy-d'Orbe; I wish you could help her, for she greatly needs it.

His Lordship wants us seriously to contemplate a means of keeping the houses united. He intends to consult the great Jesuit Fathers about it, and he

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meeting was not to give her the consolation for which she had hoped. The town was crowded with persons of distinction, all of whom flocked to the Visitation, there to meet 'the Sun of Prelates,' as they called St. Francis de Sales. One day the Archbishop of Bourges and his nephew, the Abbé de Neuchèze, the devout Sister Marie de Valence, and Père Cotton, S. J., all met in our parlour, so that it was said our house was the meeting-place of all the holiest people, and had become, so to say, a court of Heaven, while the court of the Royal Princess was being held in the town.

"Upon a certain day St. Francis, having some hours free, came to the parlour to confer with the Venerable Foundress; but much as she wished to speak to him of her interior state, he would not permit her to do so, deferring all that until their return to Annecy, desiring her to visit the Monasteries of Valence, Grenoble, and Belley before returning to Savoy. St. Jane Frances at once set out, never dreaming that she had seen her blessed Father for the last time on earth." (Taken from the "History of the Foundation of Lyons.") St. Francis died on the 28th of that same month.

wishes us always to have recourse to them, for he says no one comes up to them. I am very glad the Father Rector likes you so much; he has always done so. Salute him very affectionately for me, also the good Father Gentil, I have the highest respect for them both. But above all do I honour with a singular reverence and affection Mgr. de Langres. Assure him of it, my child. When he goes to Dijon and when I know he is there I shall write to him.

M. Gariot is here: he will worry you with his suggestions, but it is not necessary, I think, to do all he wants, at least I don't: above all in the parlour, where I cut him short; nevertheless, my Love, have his affairs recommended to Councillor Berbisey. This is urgent, for he wishes to start. My good cousin, I must tell you, is in admiration of you (three lines illegible). He has a good heart; be quite open with him, and with the good Sister de Vigney, who is also very fond of you, as indeed are all the others.

Adieu, my child, my truly amiable and dearest daughter. God be blessed—Our Lady's Day—have prayers said for our affairs. Salute on my behalf all our relatives, our friends, and whoever else you wish.

LII.

To Mother Anne Catherine de Beaumont, Superior of the First Monastery of Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1623.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER,

It is indeed true that the privation of the presence of my beloved Father is the greatest sorrow I could have: for it was my priceless privilege and my sole joy in this life. But since it has pleased God to deprive me of it I acquiesce in His good pleasure with all my heart, consoling myself in that I can now say with truth: "He is my supreme and only consolation." Alas! my dearest Sister, ought not this to be enough and even all-satisfying? Truly that heart is too avaricious for which God is not enough: and miserable is the heart which is satisfied with anything less than God. I owe it to you, and it is my wish to tell both you and Sister Hélène-Angélique (L'huillier), since by the goodness of God you are so perfectly united, that this most holy soul, who in life gave us so many perfumes of virtue, gives us still the manifestation of them.* The greater part

* We read in the history of the foundation of Annecy: "As soon as the blessed body (of St. Francis de Sales) had been carried into the first Monastery, celestial perfumes were perceived throughout the entire house, on account of which our worthy Mother forbade the Sacristan, who alone

of the sisters here perceived numberless times and in divers places odours so sweet and extraordinary that we can but think it is our Blessed Father who visits us and makes us understand by these celestial perfumes that he is praying for us. How this penetrates me, dearest Sister! On Sunday I was quite overcome, for three distinct times I was conscious of them.

It would take too long to tell you how God is manifesting His most humble Servant. In a word there is much for which to thank and glorify Him. Do so then, my daughter, whom my soul loves, and let your gratitude be shown by faithful observance to all we have learnt. Oh! what honour and happiness is comparable to that of serving in humble and absolute submission the holy will of our good God! Let us only think of, only seek this glorious eternity, for there is our Sovereign Good, with whom we shall eternally rejoice. May He be blessed!

Yours, etc.

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had in her keeping pastilles and perfumes, to use any of them, and a like obedience she gave to all the Sisters, forbidding them to handle or put any scented thing anywhere in the house. But all these precautions only served the better to make known the favour Our Lord had granted, for the cloisters, corridors, choir, oratories, and other places of the Monastery were perfumed with a most fragrant odour, which, like a heavenly unction, spread many interior graces upon the Community."

LIII.

To Mother Marie Hélène de Chastellux, Superior at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1623.

Glory be to God, dearest Daughter, that this disagreement between you and our Sisters of Nevers has come to an end. I have known of it for a long time. Henceforth, I conjure you, live together in perfect and sweet union, for such was the desire of our Blessed Father.

I shall write to our Sister the Superior of Paris, and if she can leave you the dowry of Sister M. Marguerite I am sure she will do so, for she is no lover of money, but justice must be maintained.

For God's sake keep far from you all desire of being well off. Love poverty and God will make you abound in true riches: this is the spirit of our Blessed Father. He could not tolerate any eagerness in us for temporal goods, or that we should be solicitous at all about them. It consoled him to see souls love and esteem poverty. Surely it is but reasonable that we who are vowed to it should no longer hold dear the riches we have renounced. And it is with the great Master that this contract has been made. Oh ! my daughter, be not angry with me for speaking thus. I do not accuse you

of this evil, but I speak because I have an extreme desire to see holy poverty honoured and cherished amongst us, and my heart's wish is that every soul in the Institute should love it.

O Jesu! never burden yourself, daughter dearest, with girls who have no religious vocation, nor fitting dispositions for our manner of life. After having exercised charity for some months towards this girl, if God does not truly touch her heart and if she does not genuinely desire to be a Religious, you ought in all humility to ask these gentlemen, her relations, to take her away: for how does it look, I pray you, to keep girls in the convent who are simply boarders and *must* have their meals apart? Certainly, daughter, this must not be done, and I feel confident that Sister Marie Aimée (de Morville) is too good-hearted not to help this girl to overcome herself, and send her to eat with the community while she is with you. My God, how we must guard ourselves against this miserable world, and take every precaution, lest its spirit enter into our monasteries. May God in His mercy preserve us from it!

I have the greatest aversion to this title *Mère ancienne*, because it is against the Rule and therefore against the spirit of our Blessed Father. You will see a little reference to it in the last conference he gave at Lyons. I should like to see our Sisters hold in such reverence his memory, and the Rule, that in comparison to them they could give no

thought at all to their own silly fancies and inclinations, and I am sure Sister Jeanne Charlotte (de Bréchard) would agree with me, as she ought to in this. Alack ! what honour is there in such things ? Rather is honour to be found in perfect observance. I am very sorry for poor Sister M. Catherine (Chariel), but she ought to be faithful to the exercises, in as much, at least, as depends on herself, by the exterior observance of them, and she should refuse to consent to those evil reflections, resisting them with the sword of the spirit. This much God has put in our power, and never can we fall except by our own will. If she is faithful to this, God will be satisfied, but she must submit herself absolutely. I will write to her.

Be most careful to let no coolness exist between you and the Jesuit Fathers, and give them no excuse for keeping away from you. Our Blessed Father would not have approved of it. Soon, please God, you will see in the Directory what he said to me at Lyons on this point. Recall them gently, daughter, and give them your former confidence. Although the good Father you mention did not take the matter rightly the Jesuits are too wise and too good to keep up a grudge against us.

I think I know Père de Géney, if it is the same; he is a very good Religious in whom you can confide. Converse in a trustful spirit with them all, but above all with the Jesuits and their Rector. He spoke the

truth to you in saying that the Sisters are satisfied and feel the improvement. Keep your courage ever higher, my most dear daughter, and always, I beseech you, govern in a spirit of extreme gentleness. Look sometimes at the advice I give to Superiors, and although I am worthless Our Lord has allowed Himself to speak through me in this. May He be blessed for ever !

If Sister M. Charlotte (de Feu) is eighteen or twenty let her in the name of God follow the community, and if on that account she suffers somewhat she will be very happy. At least do not let her be the judge of her own needs, and she should submit herself to you. Give her plenty to do, and then be at her side to help her. You ought not to have sent out that letter that you did not understand, though it is true when written to one of ourselves there is less danger.

Bear with the old woman, I beg of you, and you will gain her to God. I rather prefer your writing during recreation than in the evening. I do this, and in the midst of our Sisters. Get Sister Jeanne Charlotte or someone else to help you in this, and write little except to our monasteries; but you should read a good quarter of an hour every evening after *Matins*, for this will be useful to you. We should wear ourselves out in the service of our neighbour, and doing so we shall be happy.

Certainly, daughter, the dormitory ought not to be

made into an infirmary: if doing otherwise gives a little more trouble to the sisters they will have all the more merit. Alas! my God, the poor have far more than this to put up with. Our Blessed Father's maxim was to refuse no inconvenience, and to ask for no relief, yet if relief was given him he accepted it. Oh, daughter, great courage is needed to seek God alone, bearing all for love of Him.

I am a little surprised to have no news of Sister Jeanne Charlotte, and Sister Marie Aimée. Had I time I would send them a note to waken them up, and assure them that I belong to them, but for this time give them my message and tell them that I wrote to them when I was at Moulins the last time, at least to the elder sister. May God in His goodness hold you in His holy hand. I am devoted to you more than I could ever put into words. God be Blessed!

I salute all our sisters, especially Sister Assistant, for whom I have a great affection, but I wish she would write to me once more, then I would answer her fully. It is because I have not had time that I have not done so. God be Blessed!

P.S.—It has occurred to me that I ought to send you the first sheet of the Directory—all that is yet out—in which is set down how the Office ought to performed on the great feasts of our Lord. His Lordship will be satisfied at its being performed in

this manner. The change must be effected quietly and imperceptibly. Our Sisters are very much pleased with it.

LIV.

To Sister Marie Marguerite Milletot at Dijon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1623.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

Do not be astonished at seeing yourself surrounded by spiritual enemies; only guard your heart so that they may not enter. But I know you would die a thousand times over rather than let them do so. Remain then in peace and patience, awaiting your deliverance by our good Saviour, and He will free you sooner than you think. This trial is, dearest daughter, hard to bear, but believe me if you had any other you would find it equally so. This life is only given us to combat. Every one has his own cross. Oh God ! how heavy is the burden to me of my own extreme misery and of my own infidelities ! May the good God deliver me from myself ! Be brave, daughter dearest, he who does not conquer shall never be crowned. I beseech the divine Goodness to strengthen you in this combat. Pray to the good God for

Your humble and unworthy Mother.

LV.

To Sister Françoise Gasparde de la Grave, Assistant to the Superior at Belley.*

Vive ✠ Jesus !

ANNECY, 1623.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Do you know that these fears and self-torturings about your past confessions are pure temptations of the devil ? Make a firm stand and take no heed of them, dear daughter, for the devil is only trying in his malice to deceive you. Bear with his attacks and the suffering that comes of them gently and humbly, submitting to the good pleasure of God, who permits them to test your fidelity and confi-

* Sister Françoise-Gasparde de la Grave, professed of the first Monastery of Annecy in 1617, was specially loved and trained by St. Francis de Sales, and always showed herself worthy of her great master. She was chiefly remarkable for her calm and unalterable sweetness in the midst of the contradictions of all kinds with which she was surrounded. " My Blessed Father has taught me," she would say on such occasions, " that the love of one's own abjection ought never to be one step distant from our hearts." She was successively Superior at Belley, Bourges, and Perigueux, from which last house she contributed to the foundation at Tulle. Having governed the Monastery of Seyssel for three years, she returned to the house of her profession, where she died in 1638. After her decease they found she had carefully written down all the humiliating things that had ever been said to her. On the corner of this packet was written: " The enclosed are to perfume my heart with the precious odour of humiliation."

dence. Pay no regard to anything the tempter suggests. Never let your mind argue about it; but suffer it without yielding consent. Throw yourself upon the mercy of the divine Mercy. Leave to it the care of your salvation and of everything regarding you. Tell God that you have entire trust in His goodness, and although it may seem to you that you have not any, never cease to assure Him that you have, and always will have with the assistance of His grace. This I command you to do. And bear patiently the burden without desiring to be delivered from it; for that would be a brave sort of virtue which never wished to be attacked, and a grand fidelity that which would surrender at the first approach of the enemy! Remain firm without wishing ever to confess past sins a second time, or ever swerving from your duty of patience and confidence in God: and you will see how God draws His glory and your good out of this temptation, for which may He in His infinite goodness be blessed.

LVI.

To Mgr. the Bishop of Autun.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

MY LORD, ANNECY, 1623.

I have heard of your kindness to our poor Sisters of Moulins in regard to the difficulties they have had with their Foundress, and that by the grace of God you and your Council, recognizing the

true virtue and uprightness of the Superior and of her Religious, gave them protection and comfort in their extreme affliction. But, my Lord, from what I learn, they at the present moment need more than ever your paternal assistance, and I humbly beg your Lordship in the name of our good God to help them. If, in order to restore tranquility in their monastery, it is only necessary to return the money to our good Sister Foundress, so that she may live elsewhere, certainly we shall be content to do so, for we love better to live poorly and keep our observance than to abound in riches and be thwarted in it. The Providence of God will never fail us as long as we persevere in fidelity to His holy service; and our delight is, under its protection, to live in poverty. See, my Lord, how I lay my sentiments before you in all simplicity. If, however, our Sister the Foundress continues to enjoy the happiness she possesses I shall rejoice provided she content herself with the privileges which you, my Lord, have either confirmed or granted her, and for the rest that she live as is fitting to her condition.

Beseeching you my Lord, very humbly and with all earnestness to provide help for these good servants of God, and trusting that through your kindness and piety the divine mercy may come to their aid, I pray God to spread in abundance His holy benedictions upon you and your Church.

I remain, with humble reverence, etc

LVII.

To Sister Anne Marie Rosset, Assistant and Mistress of Novices at Dijon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1623.

You know and you can never doubt how truly you are my dearest daughter. Lay claim to this title more and more by your charity in praying for me. Indeed, my daughter, this dear Mother (Favre) is a soul of true virtue. She is all for God, for the Rule, and for me. I hope you will always continue to feel that you have a faithful friend in her. The spirit of religion and even religion itself is destroyed by preoccupation about miserable human affections. If the intelligence of the Sisters be not clouded by them nor by self-love they will see the guidance of God over this soul, and through her over other souls, and will themselves be established in solid virtue. Keep the spirit of your novices at a high level and do it with vigour. Engrave in their hearts this maxim, that the love of their divine Saviour is the only love for them, and that in Him they must love their neighbour according to the order of duty and true charity. Oh God ! what should we seek on earth or aspire to in heaven save Thee who art our portion and our eternal inheritance ? My daughter, a Religious of the Visitation who should attach herself to anything whatsoever but God is not

worthy of her vocation. Make this very clear to our Sisters. Each one must have a holy zeal to attain eternal life by the path which God has marked out for her. If our Sisters really love their holy Founder they will prove it not only by the attention and pleasure with which they read his writings, for all the world delights in them, but also by faithfully carrying out his teachings. That incomparable love and sweetness towards their neighbour, that profound humility and lowliness of which he was so great a lover, and which put him at enmity with all ostentation, should above all be practised by them. Finally, let them make theirs the glorious gift he enjoyed of devout attention to the presence of God.

My daughter, see that the spiritual exercises are held in great esteem by the novices. Bring this about: for prayer, recollection, and frequent ejaculatory prayer are the oil of benediction in monasteries Give good books to those dear novices to read, so that their minds may be filled with profitable food wherewith to make useful reflection, and to undeceive themselves as to the value of the false maxims of the world. Make them value thoroughly the acts and exercises of their Directory, so that their memory being well stored with spiritual things, and their understanding well enlightened, our divine Master will (as I hope) soon warm their wills with His holy love.

Your devoted.

LVIII.

To the Rev. Father Dom John de Saint François, General of the Order of Feuillants.

ON ST FRANCIS DE SALES.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

1624.

Alas! my Rev. Father, you command me to do what is beyond my capacity. The intimate knowledge that God has permitted me to acquire of the interior life of my blessed Father and Lord, and especially that with which He has favoured me since this holy man's decease (for the object being present somewhat, it seems to me, obscured the light), is, I feel, altogether beyond my deserts: and I confess to you quite frankly that I have no facility whatever in expressing myself. Yet to obey your Reverence and for the love and respect which I owe to the authority by which you command, I will write what comes to my mind in all simplicity, in the presence of God.

First, then, I have always observed in him the perfect gift of faith accompanied with great clearness, certitude, perception, and extreme suavity. It was a subject upon which he spoke admirably, and he once told me that God had bestowed upon him much light and knowledge of the mysteries of

* This letter is taken from "Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres," Vol. II.

our holy faith, and he thought that he had a good grasp of the correct interpretation of the Church's teachings to her children. To this his life and writings bear witness.

God had so fully illuminated this holy soul, or, as he put it, shed so clear a light in the highest point of his soul, that he had, so to say, but to open the eyes of his spirit and the excellencies of the truths of faith lay before him, and from this proceeded raptures, ecstacies, and celestial ardours. He submitted himself to the truths thus unveiled to him by a simple yielding up of his will, and the place wherein these illuminations were centred he called "The Sanctuary of God." It was his place of retreat, his every day abode, for notwithstanding continual exterior occupation he held his spirit in this interior solitude as much as was possible. The one longing, the sole aspiration and desire of this holy man, it always seemed to me, was to live by faith and according to the maxims of the Gospel. He used to say that the true way to serve God was to follow Him and walk in His footsteps by the pure light of grace, without the support of consolations, of feeling, of light, other than that of bare faith, and for this reason he valued derelictions, desolation, and dryness of spirit. He never stopped, he said, to think whether or no he had consolations, and that if Our Lord sent them he received them in simplicity; if they were not given him he made no reflections about

their loss. But as a matter of fact he usually had great sensible sweetness, as was betrayed by his countenance, however slightly he withdrew into himself, which he was in the habit of doing. Thus did he draw good out of all things, turning all to the profit of his soul. The time of preparation for his sermons, which he usually spent walking about, was one of special illumination for him. Study, he said, provided him with prayer, and he came from it enlightened and full of holy affections.

Several years ago he told me that he had no sensible devotion in prayer, and that God operated in him without feeling, but by sentiments and illuminations, which were diffused in the intellectual part of his soul, the inferior part having no share therein. These were for the most part perceptions and sensibilities of simple unity and heavenly emotions which he did not try to fathom: for his practice was to hold himself in humility and lowliness before God with the trustful reverence of a loving child.

When writing to me he has often asked me to remind him when we met to tell me what God had given him in prayer. When I did so he would say, "These things are so impalpable, so pure, so intangible, that one cannot explain them when they have passed, only their effects remain in the soul."

For several years before his decease there was left him little leisure for prayer, as business over-

whelmed him, and one day when I asked him if he had any time for prayer, he said: "No, but I do what is the same." In such wise he held himself always united to God, saying that in this life work and labour are prayer. And most certainly his life was a continual prayer. Though, from what has been said, it is easy to believe that the delightful union of his soul with God in prayer was not his only enjoyment. Oh! indeed it was not, for however the will of God was presented to him he equally loved it. And in his last years he had, I believe, attained such purity in his love that all things were the same to him so long as he saw God's will in them. There was nothing in the world, as he used to say, that could give him any satisfaction out of God. Thus he lived, as was manifest to those who knew him, no more in himself but truly Jesus Christ lived in him. This universality in his love of the will of God was the more excellent and the purer by reason of the clear light which God diffused in his soul, and because of it his soul was neither subject to change nor to deception, and by it he perceived in himself the first movements of self-love which he faithfully suppressed the more perfectly to be united to God. He told me, that, sometimes in the depth of his greatest afflictions, he felt consolations beyond comparison more sweet than at ordinary times, for by means of this intimate union with God things most bitter became to him most sweet.

But, if your Reverence wishes to see clearly the

state of this holy soul on these points, read, if you please, the three or four last chapters in the "Divine Love."* All his actions were animated with the sole motive of pleasing God, and truly (as he says in this sacred book) he asked nought of heaven nor of earth but to see the will of God accomplished. How many times has he not repeated over to me those words of David: "O! Lord, what have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth? Thou art my portion and my eternal inheritance" He lived on the principle that what was not God was nothing to him. His eminent virtue and that universal indifference which was remarked in him by all were the product of this perfect union. I never read those chapters which treat of it in the ninth book of "Divine Love" without seeing clearly that as occasions arose he practised what he taught.

That admirable but little known maxim, *Ask for nothing, desire nothing, refuse nothing*, which he faithfully carried out to the very end of his life, could not originate with one who was not entirely indifferent and dead to self. In regard to his actions such incomparable equality of mind did he possess that there was no changeableness in his attitude. He unquestionably felt keen resentment when subjected to rudeness or insult, above all when God was offended, or his neighbour oppressed; but on such occasions, as is mentioned in his memoirs, he exercised complete self-control and would retire

* The treatise on the Love of God.

into himself with God and remain silent. Yet he none the less set to work, and that promptly, to remedy the evil, for he was the refuge, the succour, the support of all.

Because he had acquired a perfect mastery of his passions, there reigned in his soul complete submission to God, and in his heart an imperturbable peace. "What is there that could disturb our peace?" he said to me at Lyons. "When all is in confusion around me it does not trouble me, for what is all the world besides in comparison with peace of heart?" This power was the outcome of his intense and virile faith, for he regarded all things, the least and the greatest, as ordained by that divine Providence in which he reposed with more tranquility than a child on its mother's bosom. He used to say that Our Lord taught him this lesson from his youth, and that if he could be born again he would despise human prudence more than ever, and would let himself be still more entirely governed by divine Providence. He had very great illumination on this subject, and conveyed it forcibly to the souls he counselled and governed. All the undertakings God committed to him he placed under the protection of this supreme government, and never was he more certain of an affair or more content amidst vicissitudes than when he had no other support than God. On the contrary, when human prudence foresaw the impossibility of the execution

of a design his firm confidence in God alone remained unshaken. Therefore did he live without solicitude. I remarked this to him when he had made up his mind to establish our Congregation, and he replied: "I have no light as to how to do it, but I am sure that God will do it"; and so it came about, and that far more quickly than he anticipated. Speaking of this confidence in God, I remember once many years ago, when attacked with a violent temptation, which he bravely resisted, he wrote to me: "I feel very much under its pressure. It seems to me that I have no strength to resist and that I should succumb if the occasion were presented to me, but the weaker I feel the more do I trust in God, and I assure myself that were the object to present itself, I should be invested with the power of God, and that my enemies would be as lambkins before me."

Our Saint was not exempt from the stirrings of passions nor did he wish nor think it desirable to be so. Except for the purpose of governing and checking them, which he said gave him pleasure, they were disregarded by him; and he looked upon them as excellent opportunities for practising virtue and establishing it more solidly in the soul. His own were so absolutely under his control that they obeyed him as slaves, and in the end hardly showed themselves at all. His was a manifestly bold and generous soul, very dear Father, strong to bear burdens and responsibilities and to carry out the undertakings

with which God inspired him. Nothing, as he said, could induce him to abandon these ; not an inch would he abate, and he had a courage that conquered all difficulties.

Certainly such perseverance as his, required wonderful strength of mind, for who has ever seen him out of humour, or losing one iota of self-control ? Who has ever seen his patience ruffled or his soul embittered against any one whomsoever ? and all because he had a guileless heart.

That he was gentle, humble, and gracious none could fail to remark. His mind was clearer, freer, and broader than any other I have come in contact with; the prudence and the wisdom natural and supernatural with which God had endowed him were excellent and solid.

Our Lord indeed forgot nothing in perfecting His work. " Charity," as he says, " entering into a soul brings with it every other virtue sweetly and unostentatiously in the degree and measure by which charity animated it." He made no mysteries, and did nothing that might excite admiration; there was no singularity about him, no display of great virtue to exalt him in the eyes of the vulgar. He walked the common way, but in so supernatural a manner that it seemed to me that of all to be admired in his life this was the most admirable trait. He had no affected ways, neither casting up his eyes nor closing them, but he kept them modestly

lowered and made no unnecessary gestures. His face, passive, sweet, and grave, portrayed the profound tranquility within.

Whoever observed his outward bearing was unfailingly impressed. Whether at prayer, reciting the office, or saying Mass, his countenance shone with angelic splendour, but it was above all at the consecration of the Mass that it seemed to radiate. This has been remarked to me a thousand times. He had a special devotion to this adorable Sacrament. It was his true life, his sole strength, and when carrying it in Procession he looked like one on fire with love. As his outpourings of love when before the Divine Sacrament, and his wonderful devotion to our Lady are treated of elsewhere I will not speak of them here.

Oh, how worthy of admiration was the order with which God had endowed this blessed soul ! so much was it under the control of reason, so calm, and so lucid the light shed by God within it that absolutely nothing passed therein that was hidden from him.

So clear was his view in regard to perfection of spirit that he could distinguish between the most subtle and intangible sensibilities, and never willingly would he tolerate the less perfect in his soul; his burning love could not suffer it. It was not that he did not commit some imperfections, but they were always from frailty or pure surprise, and I never knew him to leave in his heart one single attachment,

however small, that was contrary to perfection. Purer than the sun, whiter than the snow in every act, resolve, and desire, he was united to God not only by his purity, but in humility and simplicity.

To hear him speak of God and of perfection was a delight, for his terms were precise and intelligible, so that they easily brought home to the understanding the high and subtle points of the spiritual life and this great gift he used for the guidance of souls. Reading the depths of their hearts and clearly seeing the motives from which they acted, he guided and governed them with a skill other than that of this world. His indefatigable charity for souls is well known, and the incomparable delight with which he laboured amongst sinners, never resting till he had put the conscience in peace and set the soul on its way to heaven. What care did he not bestow upon the weak and repentant sinner, making himself one with him, weeping together with him over his sins, and becoming so one in heart with his penitent that none could conceal anything from him.

Zeal for the salvation of souls was, I consider, his dominant virtue, and in a sense it may be said that he preferred the service of his neighbour, for whom he wore himself out, to the immediate service of God. His charity was regulated in a remarkable manner, for he loved the many souls for whom he had a special regard, and they were great in number, not equally yet perfectly, and purely, recognizing

the most estimable virtue and the measure of grace in each and giving it place accordingly in his regard. While to all he bore the utmost respect because he saw God in his neighbour and him in God, yet his humility never prevented him from reverencing the dignity of his position as Bishop, and with what gravity and majesty he bore himself in it.

I now venture to repeat what so many persons have said to me—that when they saw this man it seemed to them that they looked upon Our Lord on earth. And to me he always appeared the living picture in which the Son of God, Our Lord, was portrayed, for most truly the order and economy of his soul was divine.

I remain, my Reverend Father,

Your very humble, obedient, and unworthy
daughter and servant in Our Lord,

SISTER JANE FRANCES FRÉMYOT
(*Of the Visitation of Holy Mary*).

LIX.

To a Religious of the First Monastery of the Visitation at Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1625.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

The wings of this little butterfly that thrusts itself out into the light before its time need to be clipped; otherwise it will come to destruction. And

in like manner, my daughter, as soon as you perceive your mind taking these high flights you must bring it down to the foot of the crucifix by a profound but gentle act of humility, holding yourself there all confused and abashed. Your doing this will put an end to the trouble. Walk simply, my daughter, and you will walk happily. Crush self-love, stamp it out; and with it self-esteem. Let true humility take its place, that humility which always and in all circumstances aims at oblivion and at being under the feet of all. This lesson is a difficult one, but God invites you to the practice of it. Follow His will and His example and He will lead you on until you attain that perfection to which His Providence has called you. Strive to keep your thoughts off yourself, and never scrutinize what is passing within you. Let this truth dwell in your heart and have it always before your mind that whatever little good there may be in you is from God, and that therefore you have no right to take pride in it, nor to think any the better of yourself because of it. Remember that of yourself you are mere nothingness, possessing only the abjection of your sins and of your countless imperfections. And bearing this in mind, welcome contempt and all that kills pride. Make use for this end of that thought of yours that the Sisters may very justly think you to be full of self-love and self-esteem, or of any other such humiliating reflection. Desire to be employed in

low and abject things. Not that you should seek them, but that you be always disposed willingly to accept them. Beg your good Mother to help you to acquire this dear virtue of humility, without, however, asking for anything in particular; for to choose would spoil everything. If you do all this you will find the source of true life, and if you do it not, you will never have any peace nor be able to correspond to your vocation and to the designs of God over you. I beseech His Goodness to grant you this precious grace.

Yours, etc.

LX.

To the Countess de Toulonjon.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

CHAMBÉRY, 1625.

Not as soon as I thought, my dearest daughter, shall we have the pleasure of seeing Mgr. of Bourges, and indeed it will be a very great pleasure. Ever since he was cured of his illness and received the other graces which Our Lord has bestowed upon him I feel drawn to him by a peculiar appreciation: and neither do I wish to cease, nor can I cease, from praising and thanking our good God for His great mercy to him. Although he frequently writes to me he has made no allusion in any of his letters to what you tell me he has done for my son.* I will

* Madame de Toulonjon having learnt that her uncle, the Archbishop of Bourges, had made his will in favour of her brother, the Baron de Chantal, and left her out, was deeply

speak to him about it when I have the honour of meeting him, and see if I cannot have the good fortune of obtaining from him something to your advantage. He always appears to me to have a great affection for you, but I do not think he has much in the way of temporal goods beyond the furniture of his house. However, I know little about this. But my good and dearest daughter, even if this good lord has altogether forgotten you, why on that account give way to sorrow and resentment ? Oh ! cease to do so, my daughter, for you might offend God by it. You are too much attached to the things of this life and take them too much to heart. What have you to fear ? Is it that the fact of having so many children deprives you of the means of providing for and educating them according to their birth and your ambition ? Have no such apprehensions, I beg of you, for in this you wrong the Providence of Him who gives them to you, and who is good enough and rich enough to nourish them and provide for them as is expedient to His glory and their salvation. That is all that we should desire for our children, and not look for worldly prosperity in this miserable and mortal life.

Now my dearest daughter, lovingly look upon all these little creatures as entrusted to you by God,

wounded at this proceeding, and when writing to her holy Mother had justified herself for her anxieties by alleging the obligation to provide for the future of her children.

who has given them to you; care for them, cherish them tenderly, and bring them up not in vanity, but faithfully in the fear of God. So doing, and trustfully leaving all these anxieties of yours to divine Providence, you will see how sweetly and tenderly it will provide for all, so that you will have good reason to bless and rely wholly upon it. Take my advice, dearest daughter, and cast yourself into these safe arms: serve God, cast aside vanity, live in perfect harmony with him whom God has given you, interest yourself in the good government of your household, be active and diligent in applying yourself to that work, and begin from this time forth to live after the manners and customs of a true mother. If I had not had the courage to do this from the beginning in my married life we should not have had the means of livelihood, for we had a smaller income than you have and were fifteen thousand crowns in debt. Be brave then, dearest daughter; employ your time and your mind not in worrying and being anxious about the future, but in serving God and your household, for such is the divine will. Act thus, and you will see how blessings will attend your undertakings. I feel that I am bound to speak thus fully and openly to you, and I hope that you will profit by what I say, for I say it with much love and with a great desire for your good; and that you will often read over this letter and put its contents in practice. May God grant you this grace, and may His Goodness

pour abundantly upon you and your dear family His choicest blessings. I cordially salute them all.

You know, dearest child, how you are my very own and most dear daughter, and that I am your very humble mother, most lovingly desirous of your true happiness.

LXI.

To Sister Anne Catherine de Sautereau, Mistress of Novices at Grenoble.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1626.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

I will do as you desire and in God's presence will write what He in His Goodness inspires me to say. I am praying that I may do this. First, then, it seems to me, my daughter, that in your devotion you should strive to be generous, noble, frank and sincere, and build upon a groundwork of profound humility which engenders true obedience, sweet charity, and that artless simplicity that makes us amiable to every one alike, bearing with and excusing all. Try to instil this same spirit into your novices and into all the souls that God may at any time put under your care.

On the other hand, dearest daughter, you must leave yourself wholly in the hands of God, so that your dear soul and the souls of those you guide, may be, as far as you can make them, independent of all

that is not God; aiming straight and with such singleness of purpose that friendships, looks, words may never be wasted in frivolous amusement with creatures. By walking in the perfect way of exact observance of the rules of the Institute, all impediments are left behind on the road and not given a thought; for in all things the eye of God only, that is, His divine good pleasure, is considered. This is a road without bypaths, daughter, but it is solid, short, simple, and safe, and by it the soul quickly attains to a rare union with God which is her end. Let us then faithfully pursue this way. Truly it cuts short multiplicity and leads us to that unity which is the one thing necessary. I know that you are attracted to this happiness. Give yourself up to it, then, and you will repose quite at your ease in the bosom of divine Providence; for souls who cast aside every aim and end but that of pleasing God are bound to dwell in peace in this tabernacle.

Abraham (I do love this patriarch) left his country and his family to obey God, but, my daughter dearest, the only Son of God accomplished the will of His heavenly Father by remaining in the country of his birth and working there.* Be satisfied, then, to imitate the Saviour, for no perfection can equal His. And do not look elsewhere, but apply yourself with diligence to do lovingly and cheerfully the

* Sister Anne Catherine de Sautereau was a native of Grenoble.

works that Providence and obedience put into your hands. The chief exercises of the novitiate are mortification and prayer. I have said enough, and perhaps too much, to one whom God Himself enlightens and directs. I pray His Goodness to bring your spirit to the perfection of His most pure love. Your soul is endeared to me more than I can tell you. Rest assured of this and pray for her who is wholly yours in Our Lord. God be praised!

LXII.

To Mother Anne Catherine de Beaumont, Superior of the First Monastery of Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
Jan. 6, 1626.

Praise be to our Good God! I assure you, my very dear daughter, that it has been a great consolation to me to read your letter and to see the state of your good heart, in which I perceive the divine Goodness diffuses many holy and profitable lights which you turn to good account. These thoughts are worthy of being noted; they are beautiful, and are great graces from the divine mercy. And so is this diversity of states in which you continually find yourself, for it holds the soul more detached and more simply united to its God in whom all its happiness consists. I see also that suffering is not wanting

to you. Suffering is the crucible in which Our Lord wishes entirely to purify you. Your interior correspondence ought wholly to consist in a simple handing over of yourself, in a complete self-surrender; then for the exterior, humility, submissiveness and meekness. And I beseech you, even if interior lights superabound, not to fail to seek counsel, preferring the opinions of others to your own, in as far as it is possible. This is one of the chief fruits of that most holy humility which should inspire all our actions. Indeed, had your letter been as long again it would only have been all the more welcome to me. May God give me the grace to draw profit from it! Although in my unworthiness I cannot walk by so high and excellent a way, still, I hope that it will do me good.

I am very glad that you have received those two good subjects, and I thank you with all my heart for our little Adrienne. It is quite true that our dear Mgr. Bourges grows daily in piety and devotion, which, methinks, must be real because there is so much humility, meekness of heart, and detachment from the things of earth about it. We shall pray very specially for good M. de N. He is a person whom I always look up to, and so I do to the Rev. Father Superior. I send them both my respectful salutations. Hold yourself very humble, my dearest daughter, and think yourself very unworthy of the graces of God: for this little holding

back will draw them on you all the more. I pray His Goodness daily to increase these graces in your soul, which I love more than I can express.

LXIII.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
28th Jan., 1626.

I see quite well, good dear daughter, that nothing will satisfy that heart of yours unless you make clear to me the holy affection it has for my miserable little heart, and I reciprocate your love to a degree that I cannot express. Oh God! what will it be to love each other with a love that is ever present and beyond all earthly love, for such is the gift the great Lover of our souls will bestow on us! Let us try, my daughter, to grow in this divine love from moment to moment. Alas! I desire it, but you—you possess it. For this may God be praised and also for the good order of your house, which our dear Father M. Vincent* tells me is a matter worthy of great thanskgiving and consolation.

Believe me, it is a true delight to me to know that our Rules are so faithfully kept. Now observe from this how Mother Superiors should see that the Rule is carried out in regard to Ecclesiastical

* St. Vincent de Paul.

Superiors, and how the Mothers themselves should faithfully observe what is prescribed for them, so that by example we may instruct and strengthen those whom God has committed to our care. Pray continually, I beg of you, for our dear Father, Dom Juste, and for the affair of the Beatification of our Blessed Father. Our Holy Father the Pope has issued a Decree about beatifications which causes me some apprehension.* But in all things we must conform our wills to that of God.

Yours, etc.

LXIV.

Mother Marie Adrienne Fichet, Superior at Rumilly.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1626.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

The letters I receive from your Sisters Councillors are the greatest comfort to me, for they bear witness to the union and content that reigns between you and them. If you practice all you teach, there is every reason that this should not only continue but increase. Let the old feel that you are satisfied with them, treating them with cordial love, respect and confidence. Be one in

* The fears of St. Jane Frances were not without cause, for the popular enthusiasm occasioned by the many miracles wrought through the intercession of the holy Bishop resulted in many *ex voto* offerings and much public worship being paid to his remains, all of which was forbidden by the Decree, pending the decision of the Church,

heart with them as true sisters ought to be; for although they should honour and obey you as their Mother, still, you ought to treat them as sisters and companions. And to the young be as a benign mother with her daughters, not pressing them too much unless it be to encourage them in a loving way. What I am writing is in reference to your last letter, in which you tell me that you often say they must be open with you. My dear daughter, you must lead them to this openness by kindness and encouragement; for the spirit of the Visitation is one of gentleness, and this must be preserved at all costs, else yours would not be a Visitation house even though all the rest of the Rules should be observed, for this, the most important of our characteristics would be wanting. Let then this holy gentleness with every one be your chief care. Retiring and tranquil in all your undertakings, carry them out prudently so that God may be glorified by your intercourse with those outside the monastery and by the sweetness of your government with those within. You are aware that your natural disposition needs bridling and that you must keep it in check. Do this then for God and you will receive all manner of graces. Keep near the good God and read carefully your Rules, for He wishes that in the charge He has committed to you you should become a living Rule, to His sovereign glory.

I had not thought of saying all this to you, but as

I write God has put it into my mind. Profit by it then, my very dear daughter, and let this letter serve you for a long time and for always, as I am sure my good Angel and yours have dictated it. If you saw my heart and its keen affection for your welfare, you would indeed love me.

For the rest, his Lordship bids me take our Sisters into Lorraine. If I can manage it, and that he approves, I'll go a little out of my way to see you. I send you some relics of our holy Father. Madame Garbillon seems inclined to take her daughter to you herself after Easter. There are still plenty of others, but we shall try to send you those who are fairly well off. However, you will be obliged to floor your dormitory in order to accommodate so many subjects. See to this in good time so as to have in the necessary planks and wood. Also have the garden wall raised a little. This, and the well, is, in my opinion, all you need.

I cannot express to you, my dearest daughter, how I love your little house. In it may God make you worthy to serve Him and all your dear daughters perfectly, not forgetting the good and dear Sister de la Fléchère, who has lodged us so comfortably. Show her much affection and comfort her with all simplicity and confidence. The poor woman needs it, for she is in great trouble about her affairs. Good-bye, dearest daughter.

Yours most affectionately.

Pray for me that I may do God's holy will. Amen.

P.S.—I must add this word. Study meekness and humble gravity. I beg it of you. The Chapter on Religious Modesty, well practised, will give you this grace.

LXV.

*To the Sisters of the Visitation.**

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1626.

MY VERY DEAR SISTERS,

I present to you, in all the sincerity of my heart, the directions and customs which have been established in this monastery by our late holy Father and Founder, having arranged them in what seemed to me the most convenient form for their preservation. And I have added, following his injunctions, some things which he had written with his own hand, and others, which he had marked, but had not yet written.

The majority of the Sisters who have known him

* Saint Jane Frances originally intended this letter to serve as a Preface to the Book of Customs, but deeming that she had spoken with too much authority therein, and also in order not to give any pretext for the calumnies of those who accused her of desiring to pose as General of her Order, the holy foundress kept back its publication, and never in her lifetime gave it to the Institute. Amongst her sisters she would not accept any other title than that of Eldest Daughter of the Family.

are aware, as I am, that it was his wish that these Directories, Ceremonials, and Customs should, in the future, be for ever observed in all our monasteries of the Visitation, in order, permanently, to keep up the union and conformity which until now has existed between them and the first monastery. To further this end, it has been my desire, by means of the first Sisters of our holy Order and of the entire Chapter here, to make them known, so that with me they may bear witness, to those who succeed us, that they are the same Directories, Ceremonials, Customs, and Ordinances which were established in this monastery of Annecy by our said holy Founder, and that they have been observed by these first Sisters, and by all the Communities which they governed, in as far as they have been communicated to them. But because it has pleased divine Providence to confer on me, though so unworthy, the honour, grace and happiness of being one of the first sisters employed in beginning this most admirable and holy manner of life, our holy Father and Founder has instructed me and them with peculiar care. Therefore, dearest Sisters, I think it will not be distasteful to you if I exhort you to be faithful to the observance of things which have been recommended for the welfare of our souls with such tender love and zeal. Nor do I think you will gainsay my recalling you to some notable points to which I know he specially wished that we should adhere.

This I do in true affection, for, to me they sum up all that is necessary for us and nothing more is needed by us. His great fear, our Blessed Father told me, was lest we should not thoroughly devote ourselves to the practice of the Rule. And I, also fearing this, pray God that our very apprehension may make us all the more faithful to our observance. "The precepts," he said, "of all virtue and perfection are contained in our Rules and Constitutions." Oh, how true this is! For if we have but one heart in God, if we honour Him in the person of one another; if we are simple, humble, chaste, poor, retiring, and all else that is prescribed, shall we not fulfil all perfection? Again, he said that our Institute teaches us sufficiently what to do, and our part is to do it. Let us, then, labour, I beseech you, very dear Sisters, with our whole hearts, whether it be in obeying or in commanding, to become living Rules, not according to our own human wisdom and prudence, but according to what is set down, practising it, exactly and punctually, to the letter, without gloss or comment; and let us rather die than under any pretext whatsoever depart from this holy way.

The peculiar obedience we owe their Lordships, our prelates, is a special virtue of our Institute. They ought to be its protectors and consequently cannot command us anything at variance with it. Many a time has our Blessed Father exhorted us to be on our guard against opening the door to any

change, for with it all will go. Not even in things of small importance would he have us yield, for little changes open the way to greater, and if we want to keep intact what we have received, and what has been so wisely instituted, we must change nothing. Old established customs, though but mediocre, are better than new ones that appear to us more desirable. Above all he charged Superiors to take heed to this, and insisted that the good or evil estate of their monasteries rests in their hands; that care and attention to their duty should, in them, be universal; that they ought not to neglect even the most insignificant points; and said that their love, cordial support, and zeal for the perfection of the Sisters in exact observance would make their monasteries abodes of happiness, and preserve their Institute. We must aspire, then, to nothing more and to nothing less than what is prescribed for us. All these words of Our Blessed Father should be engraven on our hearts and practised literally. If, however, times and places demonstrate the necessity of accommodating in some point, and the change affects in no way the Rules, Constitutions, and Customs essential to the conformity of the convents, such change can be made. But we should first consult the Spiritual Father, some capable and pious persons, and the old established monasteries of the Order, above all Annecy, which latter, after having maturely considered the proposition, should confer

with the monastery of Lyons, so that the changes introduced may not be made lightly, nor except when of great utility for the welfare of the monasteries and in cases of evident necessity. Another grave fear entertained by Our Blessed Father was, lest the spirit of worldly prudence and wisdom should glide in amongst us. Here also then should we be on our guard, for it would be our ruin; above all if it crept in in regard to the election of Mother Superiors and of those Sisters who have the chief charges in the monasteries. Most careful and conscientious should the Sisters be on this point, never receiving any Superior but her whom they themselves have elected; for this the Rule commands. Make no account on these occasions of certain natural or acquired talents, of the gift of speaking well, of fine presence, of certain attractive qualities, of brightness of manner, of nobility, or of many years of priority in age or in Religion, nor of such qualities which if they be not accompanied with what is solid, should not be considered by us. Rather let us choose those who have discretion and good judgement, who are simple, sincere, humble, who have zeal for the observance. Not those who abound in their own sense, for such as are affected with this malady usually discredit the spirit of religion in order to introduce their own. We should employ those who do not seek the higher charges, judging themselves unworthy of any.

Such sisters will do admirably all that obedience orders and the spirit of God will govern in them. Believe me, this point is of great importance, my dearest Sisters. Be faithful to it, then, I beg of you.

In the same way must we dread human prudence and human considerations in the reception of subjects (the good choice of which is essential for the preservation of the Institute); above all of subjects who are infirm or defective in body. You will tell me that this has been so often recommended in our writings that there is no need for me to speak of it here. Yes, this is true, yet I cannot refrain from repeating myself, because I see that this article on the reception of those who have some bodily defect is often combated by wise persons, and is quite contrary to natural prudence, which sometimes furnishes so many good reasons that poor charity has trouble enough to hold herself above it. Wherefore, to observe this point intact we need great courage, and we should often call to mind that it is the end of our Institute, and the desire of desires of our holy Institutor, as is shown by his warning to those who infringe it. And see how by this law he has provided us with a means of practising the two cherished virtues of our Congregation to which he so constantly exhorted us: gentle charity towards our neighbour, and love of our own humiliation. All that can help us to gain these virtues ought to be very dear to us, since they are the foundation

and mainstay of the whole spiritual edifice of the Visitation. Let us then cleave to them, humbling ourselves more and more, so that we may accept lovingly and with a welcome all that is abject in the eyes of the world. Thus may we esteem ourselves very poor and little in comparison to others, desiring no other excellence than not to excel, depending wholly on the good pleasure of God, seeking in all things only His glory, for this, as you know, is the characteristic of the daughters of the Visitation. Oh! my dearest daughters, how we should prize it! It is the one thing worth caring about. For the love of God, let us preserve it in its entirety, and beware of the desire of excelling and of self-esteem, which would rob us of it. Continually bear in mind all that our Blessed Father has both left us in his writings and said to us on this subject, so that our undertakings may be adorned with this holy virtue. I shudder as I write and cannot keep back my tears from the fear that some day this spirit will be lessened or lost. Oh my God! permit not this, but rather let our Institute cease to be. My Sisters, I entreat you to be faithful. When I recall the labours, cares, and pains through which our holy Founder established and confirmed us as we now are, and his intense desire that this spirit should continue unimpaired, I feel that I would willingly give my life to preserve it. With all the strength of my soul then I say: Be jealous of it, for it is the supreme means of draw-

ing down upon us the grace of God, in whose hands Our Blessed Father has left us with the assurance that within the paternal Arms of the sovereign Providence of God we shall never lack grace to maintain our Institute in its first fervour, provided we are faithful to its spirit.

When at Lyons he gave me the good and solid reasons on which he had formed his final resolve to leave us under the authority of their Lordships the prelates. He added, with a deep and humble sense of confidence: " Jesus Christ will be your Head and your Protector—the happiness of your Congregation will not depend on being placed under the government of one Superior, but on the fidelity of each Sister individually, and of all together, to unite themselves to God by an exact and punctual observance." These are very consoling and striking words, full of faith as they are. I am aware that they are in the Book of Customs, yet I feel impelled to quote them again here, for I should like to write them in a hundred places, and above all in the depths of your hearts. We should look upon them as the last will and testament of our holy Founder, and by faithful practice keep them inviolably. In them we shall find our happiness and the one and only means of preserving untarnished the spirit of our Institute, which is a spirit strong and finely tempered. By means of them shall we also learn how to hide ourselves and how to dwell in peace in

the paternal bosom of our good God, humbly trusting that these his words will produce deeds. So we must not be anxious, no matter what happens to us, but remain ever tranquil, striving with the assistance of divine grace not to philosophize on what may never come about. For our Blessed Father said to me: " To maintain our Congregation we may search in vain amongst human means for any better way than our Rule."

He likewise told me that he intended to put things still more plainly, so as to secure that unity and conformity amongst the monasteries and that spirit of humility, with all of which God had already so abundantly blessed them; for he longed above all things that they should continue as they are. He ordered me to see that, to the permissions for foundations given by the Bishops, the article on " Foundations " which is in the Book of Customs should be added. The principal exterior means that he judged suitable for keeping up union was conformity to and correspondence with Annecy in everything regarding the complete observance received from him. " Although," he said, " it is established in a small town, it has nevertheless been the will of divine Providence that the germ of the Congregation of the Visitation should be formed there, and there receive its law and foundations." Wherefore the other monasteries of the Visitation are always to acknowledge the house of Annecy as their mother and source, and

maintain with it the closest union of charity, conforming themselves entirely to it, having particular intercourse with it, and referring to it in order to be instructed in the doubts and difficulties which may arise in practising the Rule and Customs. Such, I assure you with entire truthfulness, was his express wish, and he informed me of it in a manner full of graciousness and wisdom. Conformity to his wishes, and likewise the happiness which this monastery possesses in being the depository of his holy body, will always induce the other houses to keep up an affectionate union with us here. And as he asked this on your parts so did he desire that Annecy should make you all a return of unstinted service, giving both materially and of its members with a great zeal and a large-hearted affection, while keeping up the observance even to the most minute regulations conscientiously and exactly, so that here it may be always found practised in its pristine vigour and integrity.

I must not omit to repeat these words of his, also said to me at Lyons: " It is by a special providence of God that the Jesuit Fathers have so great an affection and charity for us. We should value this and return it, holding them in singular respect and giving them our confidence, for they will be a great help to us. It is not, however, necessary so to attach ourselves to their Order as to lose our liberty, for this we must jealously guard. Neither should

it prevent us from union with other Orders with which we ought to keep in touch, for our Congregation should have a universal spirit"; and again: "I do not meant hat those who counsel our Sisters are to change their exercises or their manner of carrying them out, for there must be no change, and in this they must be firm."

Such is almost word for word what I learned from his lips, and to know his will is sufficient, I feel assured, in the goodness of your hearts, to render you docile to it. For me, it but remains to urge you to this, not only exteriorly, but what is of far more consequence, interiorly, in the spirit, to be cordial, gentle, humble, artless, poor with a poverty which keeps us to a holy medium in everything, avoiding superfluities and all that savours of ostentation. To all this I affectionately entreat you with all the earnestness of which I am capable. I cannot truly bring my letter to a close without congratulating this dear convent of Annecy on the privileges and graces with which eternal Providence has been pleased to favour it in rendering it lovable and worthy of respect to all the other houses, for where will true daughters of this Order be found who hold it not in high esteem and who envy it not its privileges, above all that of being the dear guardians of the sacred body of its Founder?—verily, a most precious grace, for which it ought unceasingly to offer the sacrifice of praise to the divine Majesty. But, my very dear daughters,

what, think you, ought to be this sacrifice of praise in thanskgiving for so great a benefit ? None other surely than the constant and persevering offering of a very exact and holy observance to all contained in the Institute, so that it will always there be found practised in its perfect vigour and integrity. See, my dear daughters, to what our birthright obliges us.

Let us then remain very humble, very poor in our own esteem, and in holy fear before God, showing our appreciation of the dignity conferred upon us not by esteeming ourselves above others, which would but turn to harm the priceless gifts we possess, but rather by being the most humble, the most lowly, the most faithful of all.

May God grant us this grace ! Amen.

May I venture to add a very humble prayer to our Sisters the Superiors, that they will keep in mind this word of the Rule: " Let us be before God under the feet of all our Sisters "? Ah ! my God, if we treat them so, if we love our Sisters with a truly maternal love, which is solicitous, vigilant, zealous for the welfare of its children; if we govern them not according to our own views we shall draw upon our family all manner of blessings. Let them feel that you have a mother's heart and solicitude for them, keeping their minds tranquil and contented, and you can do what you like with them.

All I have said above, very dear Sisters, I have

said solely moved by love and desire. I reiterate it all with the most emphatic and tender entreaties from the depth of my heart. All our happiness is shut up in it. We are obliged to it by vow. It is our way of perfection of which we shall have to render an account at the hour of death. Think well on this.

I pray the divine Goodness, through the intercession of His Holy Mother and of our Blessed Father, to pour on you all the abundant treasures of His grace, so that generously and cheerfully you may continue to walk on this road, gaining by it the fullness of all perfection in this life and in the next the prize of a blessed eternity.

Pardon the great length of this letter and its confidences, and obtain from the divine Mercy eternal salvation for her who wishes you God's best graces in abundance and who is, with unbounded affection,

Devotedly yours.

LXVI.

To Sister Anne Marie de Lage de Puylaurens, Assistant and Mistress of Novices at Bourges.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1626.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

God has indeed favoured you in giving you His holy light and strength to extricate yourself from the dangerous temptation against your good, virtuous Mother. It is the devil's doing, in the hope of

upsetting you both by disuniting you. God be blessed who has delivered you. Take great care never to fall into it again and keep invariably united to your written Rule, and to the living rule which is your Superior. For it may be that God will permit you to be under a very imperfect Superior, and, if so, endure it. The spirit of God is there for you, and think of nothing save that. Most assuredly, if faithful you will never come to grief by this road.

Yes, of course, dearest daughter, your timidity comes from self-love. For the love of God, master your inclination and live as the Rule tells us, according to reason and to the will of God. If you yourself do not make up your mind to this, there is no way of helping you. You can be told what you ought to do, but no one can do it but yourself. Be brave then. God requires this of you. He calls you to a high perfection, and your true way, the solitary road by which you can attain it, is by corresponding faithfully to the exact observance of the Institute, and this with a holy fervour of spirit, humbly, sweetly and simply. It consoles me to hear that you have cut short your introspections, and that you are more tranquil in the desire for your advancement, this eagerness comes from nothing but self-love. Be watchful against it always, I beg of you, and accustom yourself to regard the will of God in all things and to unite yourself to it. There is nothing changed in the ceremonial. You can take as you

think fit from the Book of Customs and the Spiritual Directory for the instruction of your Novices, whom I affectionately salute, and you also whom my soul cherishes with a special and cordial love. I beseech of you to be cordial and generous.

LXVII.

To the Baron de Chantal, the Saint's Son.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1626.

I have an intense longing for news of you, as I cannot but feel anxious about this pain you are suffering. If I could but ease it by bearing it in my own body ! God so willing, what a relief it would be to me, for my heart is sore at the thought of you. Yet, believe me, my dearest Son, this suffering is sent for the profit of your soul. Bear it then as sweetly and as patiently as you can. It will help to win heaven for you. Lift up your heart often to that blessed country. The happiness that awaits us there is eternal, while the sorrows of this life soon pass away. And I beseech you, my own beloved Son, since your condition obliges you to row on the tempestuous sea of this world, try never to swallow its waters, but drink rather of those of Divine grace, turning in all your needs with a loving, filial trust to that source of mercy. Love above all else, and fear to displease, the God of sovereign goodness who

alone can make you happy both here and hereafter. That you may possess in abundance His most precious graces is the abiding wish of her who with all her heart loves and cherishes you, her own special one.

Your good Mother.

LXVIII.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1627.

May blessings of every description be bestowed upon my very dear son and beloved daughter for this new year and for always, so that after having lived long and happily together here on earth they may continue in the enjoyment of one another in eternal glory. This is my wish of wishes for you, dearest son, and for that most charming little wife whom God has given you and whom I love so tenderly for your sake. I long for news as to the health of both of you and of the dear little daughter,* whom may God also make altogether His own if it please Him.

I still look forward to visiting you next summer, as Mother de Châtel, who is Superior here (at Annecy), desires me to go to Orleans, and you are so near that I hope to be able to see you and your little family. This consolation I promise myself with the help of divine Providence which I unceasingly invoke

* Marie de Chantal, afterwards Madame de Sévigné.

for you, that it may lead you securely through all the miseries and temptations of this wretched life, beset as it is with occasions of separating us from God's holy fear and love. My beloved son, never put a foot outside the safe keeping of this love and fear. Think of the eternal life to which we are all journeying and of the instability of this one, which is but a roadway on which we pass from one sorrow to another. In the name of God let us so live here that we may live together eternally in everlasting happiness and glory. This desire consumes the heart of your unworthy Mother, who loves you beyond words.

LXIX.

To M. de Coulanges, Junior, at Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,

SIR, *12th January*, 1627.

I bless God with all my heart for the good news you give me of your happy marriage and of the complete recovery of my son. Indeed, I am allied to your honourable family by so many obligations and so close an affection that I cannot but share in a large measure all the good and evil fortune that befalls you; therefore have I every reason, seeing you so happy in this marriage, to rejoice with you and to congratulate your family. Thanking God, as I do with all my heart, for this great blessing, I beg

of Him in His infinite goodness to spread an abundance of graces upon your union and to give you many prosperous years. Such, Sir, are the wishes of my heart for you and for your wife, whom I pray to believe me to be her very humble servant.

Always your very
humble and affectionate servant.

LXX.

To the Countess de Toulonjon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1627.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

May God in His infinite goodness recompense you by an abundance of spiritual and temporal blessings for the loss you have sustained in the death of a son,* tidings of which have reached me. I know that you will have received this visitation of God with a patient and loving submission to His good pleasure, for in this valley of tears we must expect many afflictions and but few consolations. Keep lifting up your thoughts to Eternal Life, where alone is to be found true repose. Into it cast all your heart and all your hopes, and teach the little one (Gabrielle†) this lesson while she is still young.

* Madame de Toulonjon unhappily lost several of her children at birth.

† Gabrielle de Toulonjon married her cousin, de Bussy Rabutin, of unenviable celebrity. Needless to say, the union was not for her a happy one.

LXXI.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1627.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

May the sweet Saviour fill you and all those dear to you with His holy love. I do not know whether you have received my last letter in answer to your confidential one. I am looking out for good news. The tender love I bear you cannot but make me a little anxious. However, I trust that God in His love will support you and bring you safely through. Now that a satisfactory peace* is, thank God, concluded, I hope to have the consolation of seeing you this year. Nevertheless, dearest daughter, do not let yourself be taken up too much with this hope, so that if divine Providence should put obstacles in the way you may not be greatly upset; for beyond everything I want you to love His holy guidance, and He is so good that He always arranges what is best for His children, one of whom you most assuredly are. How I long to impress upon you this truth, that nothing can happen except by the order and disposition of the Eternal Will. I salute dear Gabrielle.

Ever your Mother, etc.

* A temporary peace made, during the Thirty Years' War, with the Huguenots in May, 1626, and called the Peace of Monzon.

LXXII.

To Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet, Superior at Rumilly.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1627.

[The first lines are illegible.]

As to your temptations, divert your mind from them, and in this do violence to yourself, but let it be a gentle violence, and yet taking good hold. This firmness tempered with mildness is, my daughter, the course for you. God has hidden the prize of eternal glory in the conquest and mortification of ourselves, but a conquest and a mortification that are always accompanied with sweetness; otherwise, with your quick nature you will be the cause of suffering not only to yourself but likewise to others. Hence, gentleness is an important factor in government, and when allied to generosity, I daily see how much souls are helped and supported by it. You are aware of the very special love which I have for your soul, and your house is to me as one of our own dormitories here. They speak of your monastery as being unfortunate, and ask how it is that it is so afflicted. Such affliction should not be spoken of as a misfortune, as it is the means of bringing glory to God; for not one of your Sisters has died whose soul is not giving Him praise in Heaven. This is, dearest daughter, the language of the world. That

of God is quite otherwise: for whenever a house is visited by such tribulation as does not offend Him it is a great mark of His benediction upon that community. Now continue to be on your guard lest there be any asperity in your corrections, for hardness is neither becoming nor fruitful. Those who have the charge of others are not usually able to say with St Paul: "I am innocent of your blood,"* meaning of the faults which these people commit. On the contrary most commonly we are guilty not only of our own faults but likewise of those of others. For either we are too severe, or too lenient; we have either corrected with harshness, not seasoning our words with the sugar of holy charity, or have neglected to correct at all.

I have nothing more to say, dearest daughter, but that I forward the money for the new habit you have made for me, and I beseech you, on the first opportunity, to send me back the old one which the sisters have kept. There is nothing upsets me more than these exterior manifestations of imaginary sanctity in me; they are simply snares that the devil lays to make me tumble into the pitfall of pride. I am already a sufficient stumbling-block to myself without your adding to it. I implore of you, all of you, not to be the occasion to me of so dangerous a temptation, and if anyone has anything belonging to me they will oblige me by burning it. Would to

* Acts, xx, 26.

God that my sisters treated me as I deserve before Him, then I should have some hope that by humiliations I might become what they imagine me to be: but this providing me with continual temptations to vanity is a thing insupportable to me. I tell you this with sorrow in my heart and tears in my eyes. The good N. and N. are very happy in having so many exterior humiliations. I cherish them more on account of these, and believe them to be, in God's judgement, which is so different from that of men, all the greater because of them.

Yours, etc.

LXXIII.

To Mother Anne Catherine de Beaumont, Superior of the First Monastery of Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
August 12th, 1627.

How good it is, my dearest daughter, to rest in God and seek only His glory! See how He has guided this election, which has been a great consolation to me, and I have every hope that this dear Mother Hélène Angelique (L'huillier) will rule with such humility and gentleness that much glory will accrue to God, and the Sisters be consoled and satisfied. The Bishop of Geneva is very glad that things have turned out as they have done. When you are in the new house I think you will do well to

send him word of your deposition and tell him of the nature of your new office.

Our Blessed Father's process* is, thank God, progressing well. The Depositions are bringing to light treasures of virtue and sanctity: His incomparable charity and profound humility shine conspicuously throughout; but, for the matter of that, there is no virtue that does not shine in him, for he possessed all in a pre-eminent degree. Lord Jesus, what a glorious thing it is to be a saint! May God make us worthy daughters of such a Father, and may we above all have the grace to imitate his humility and his poor opinion of himself! Oh how happy we should be if we could love this lowliness and poverty so much prized by him.

The Archbishop of Bourges will be here till October; but he will not be able to finish the business. The Bishop of Belley will then take it up, for it is going to be a long affair. We start for Orleans (D.V.) at latest on the 15th of October.

If Sister M. M.'s mind is not in accord with that of her superior of Paris, and she is not satisfied, though it seems to me she ought to be, you would be doing a great charity to take her away with you. It is a misery to see poor souls like this who are not content with things as they are; however, they are objects of our charity and our forebearance. Goodbye, very dear daughter; I pray God to fill you and

* Process of Beatification.

all our dear Sisters with His holy love. I salute all, but in particular Sister Assistant. Our Sister the Superior of Blois writes to tell me that their good foundress has died. Help to relieve them if you can in reference to the foundation.* They have confidence that you will do your best for them, and do it, I beg of you.

LXXIV.

To a Visitation Superior.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1627.

Thank you, my dear daughter, for praying for my son. With his death,† most truly, came to me not a

* This is to say, see that the sum promised by the foundress for the founding of a convent is forthcoming.

† The death of the Baron de Chantal is related by a contemporary historian in the following terms: "Chantal was chosen to head the first squadron of Volunteers, which at this time comprised the whole flower of the Court, and finding himself under orders to defend the Isle of Ré against the English on July, 22nd, 1627, held his post with such tenacious courage during six hours, although he had received twenty-six pike wounds, of which he died two hours later, that the heroism of his death was the subject of universal praise, and all mourned him as his valour merited. He was thirty-one years of age. The end of this gallant gentleman was as Christian as it was self-sacrificing. On the morning of the combat he prepared himself by the reception of the Sacraments, and breathed his last in sentiments of the most sincere piety. The following day Toitas claimed his body from the English General, and it was then embalmed and buried in the Isle of Ré, his heart having

feeling of death so much as of life for the soul of my child, and God has given me a very clear light and a very tender gratitude for His mercy towards this soul. Alas! not one of the fears that used to come upon me of his dying in one of those duels into which his friends enticed him but was harder to bear than has been this good and Christian death. And although it has deeply affected me, yet the consolation in the thought that my son has given his blood for the Faith outweighs the sorrow. Besides, dear daughter, it is a long time now since I have given him and everything to Our Lord, by whose goodness I hope to obtain the grace no more to desire aught save to see Him dispose of all things to His liking in time and in eternity.

LXXV.

To Mother Jeanne Hélène de Gérard, Superior at Embrun.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
14th September, 1627.

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER,

I have just received your letter, and as we are on the point of starting for Orleans I can neither give my answer the attention the matter deserves,

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been sent to his sorrowing widow, who had it buried with honour in the church of the Minims in Paris, from whence it was afterwards removed to the Church of the Visitation Monastery, Rue St. Antoine."

nor go into it as fully as may be necessary. But God with His wonted goodness will make up for my deficiencies. Those good subjects to whose admittance your Archbishop objects must not, of course, be received, and if the Fathers write to me in reference to them I will keep to his Lordship's commands.

It is impossible for a superior to undertake to give all her orders at the Obedience* although it is well for her to think a little beforehand of what she intends to say at that time. The defect you mention is a mere trifle, but that of urging on spirits over much, although there is rarely sin, owing to your purity of intention, is, however, a matter of great importance: therefore, my dearest Sister, do, I beg of you, proceed gently in this holy work.

Read with attention the writings of our holy Founder (St. Francis de Sales), and you will there see the extreme sweetness and suavity with which he led souls, and how marvellously they thus advanced. Follow his spirit closely, I pray you, animating all, encouraging all, yet always with gentleness. Commonly speaking, we have more strength for bearing up on great occasions than on small ones, so it is that being overcome by slight difficulties we get to know, through the grace of God, how weak we are, and in this way He keeps us humble and

* Before the Sisters disperse at the morning and evening recreations they receive "Obediences" from the Superior as to any change of employment or any special devotions in the course of the day.

dependent on Him. These little attacks which give you heart-aches are nothing to an enlightened mind resolved to will only as God wills; and this, I know, is your own sole aim.

Your sincerity in telling me this thought (that you are more enlightened than I am) has given me great pleasure. Such openness and simplicity of heart is the cream of virtue, which I desire for the daughters of the Visitation. May God increase it in you, together with the love of your own humiliation and holy liberty of mind.

Keep to this way, very dear daughter, and God will, I trust, make you experience the wonders of His mercy. Abide, I pray you, between the arms of divine Providence and of holy Obedience, and let not your desires outstep these limits.

Believe me, daughter, it is to God's glory that you finish your term of office. I mean your triennial term in the charge of which obedience has placed you. I have a thousand reasons, both for God's sake and for what is becoming in yourself, to show you that this is the Visitation spirit, but I have no leisure to write them. Give us the comfort of seeing you persevere generously. You have only eighteen months to get through. It will soon pass, and at the end of it you will have abundance of consolation for having satisfied the good pleasure of God who asks this of you. Before that time, please God you will confer and resolve together as to who is to be

your successor, and also about the buildings in regard to which it would be well to have the opinion of the Archbishop so as to conform to it as much as possible. . . . I want to say a few words to Sister Anne Marie (Bon) and then hasten to finish.

Praying God abundantly to spread His holy benedictions upon you and all your dear family, I recommend myself with great earnestness to your prayers, that in this journey, and at all times, I may accomplish the holy will of God. I shall always answer your letters whenever I receive them, for God has given me a very sincere affection for you and for your little house, and my desire is to respond to the holy confidence you place in me with so much candour and fidelity.

Adieu, dearest daughter. Believe me, with my whole heart,

Your very humble sister and servant.

LXXVI.

*To Sister Françoise-Angélique de la Croix de Fésigney, Mistress of Novices at Riom.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ORLEANS, 1627.

MY DEAREST LITTLE ONE,

Your letter has given me much consolation, for in it I see somewhat more determination to

* This Sister was a relative of St. Francis de Sales. St. Jane Frances, who never flattered, used to call her "the little Saint."

follow the advice we have given you, which, for you, is the only suitable advice. Keep your heart on high and confide with holy joy, and no reserves, in the goodness of God. He has designed to make choice of you for His service in the Monastery in which He has placed you: where no doubt there are others more capable than you, but that does not signify in God's eyes. It is humility, not capacity, He looks for. The most humble and the most faithful to His divine will contents Him most, and this is, I know, the way in which you are determined to serve Him. Live where you now are as you used to live at Nessy, growing in perfection by perseverance in the practice of virtue. This is all I ask of you. And if you give way now and again, be not cast down by such falls, but for love of God rise again with courage. It will give me great pleasure if you try to suppress childish ways. I wish I could make you see this. Should you, however, fall into them sometimes, do not worry. In a word, dearest little one, guide your novices boldly according to the teaching of the Directory and you will see how God will bless your care of them. For my part I feel sure He wishes to use you for the well-being of your monastery, for, as you know, all depends on the novitiate.

I never thought much of good Sister Madeleine. Let her not think that I believe in her revelations. Most assuredly God does not give such to souls who

are so full of imperfections. She can tell untruths about what I said to her just as she does about other things. Try, however, to gain her and give poor Sister, the Superior, all the comfort you can. I write in haste. I should like to write often, but I cannot. However, we shall meet again, please God. My daughter, my dearest little one, be henceforth, I repeat, joyous and generous in the service of the good God. Ask Him always how you should speak and act, and be assured that in everything for your good and for that of your dear novices He Himself will act and speak through you. I salute most affectionately the novices whom I dearly love, and all our Sisters. May God put Sister N. in the right way.

Adieu, daughter.

LXXVII.

*To St. Vincent de Paul.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS,
December, 1627.

Now that you are working in the Province of Lyons, my very dear Father, we shall have no opportunity of seeing you for a long time, yet it is

* The reciprocal affection and veneration of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Francis de Sales is well known. Both trained in the school of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the one the apostle of Charity, the other of Gentleness, these two souls bore so striking a resemblance to one another that when, upon the death of St. Francis, St. Chantal placed

not for us to gainsay what God arranges. May He be blessed in all things. But, very dear Father, I am taking advantage of the liberty which in your charity you have given me to continue importuning you with my confidence, and I do so in all simplicity.

I gave four days to the Exercises (Retreat), and no more, on account of the amount of business that has come unexpectedly upon me. During those days I realized how much I need to labour at acquiring humility and at bearing with my neighbour. I have been trying to acquire these virtues during the past year, and with Our Lord's help have practised them somewhat. But it is His doing, not mine, and if it please Him I will so continue as He gives me many opportunities for the practice of them. For my part it seems to me that I am in a simple state of waiting on the good pleasure of God to do whatever He wills with me. I have no desires, no plans; I hold to nothing, and very willingly leave myself in His hands; still, I do this without sensible devotion, but I think it is all right at the bottom of my heart. I just do at the present moment what seems to me necessary without thinking any further, or planning for the future. The whole inferior part of my being

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herself under the guidance of St. Vincent de Paul, she is said to have felt that she had made no change in her spiritual direction. Of her intimate correspondence with St. Vincent, which continued until her death, there remains, unfortunately, but a mere fragment.

is frequently in revolt, and this causes me much distress. I can but bear with it, knowing that through patience I shall possess my soul. Moreover, I have an ever increasing weariness of my charge, for I cannot endure the labour it entails, and I am obliged to force myself to do the necessary work which is wearisome to both mind and body. No matter how I am occupied, my imagination gives me a good deal of trouble, and it all makes me sick at heart. Our Lord permits me besides to have many exterior difficulties, so that nothing in life gives me pleasure save only the will of God who wills them. I beseech you to implore Him to have mercy on me, and I shall never fail to pray Him with all my heart to give you the strength you need for the charge that He has entrusted to you.

LXXVIII.

To the Countess de Toulonjon.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

PARIS,
10th of May, 1628.

MY GOOD, DEAREST DAUGHTER,

May God be your eternal joy and consolation! The Bishop of Chalons has written to tell me what a comfort it has been to him to have had you near him for a little while, and his only regret is that you could not have stayed longer. He is most kind-hearted. . . .

M. Coulon, at the request of M. de Coulanges, has brought me all the contracts, in order to let me see just how things have been, which indeed I knew already, and an account of which I have given in a memorandum to M. de Bussy for you, so that M. de Saint-Satur may make up his mind either to relinquish his claim or to make it good: for M. de Coulanges wishes to hear our side of the matter before putting my son's property in order. This is, dearest daughter, my reason for begging of you to settle how you intend to act, for if this business is dragged on, the property will be spent to the ruin of the little de Chantal child. I hope Our Lord in His goodness will let us see clearly the truth, and that seeing it we may preserve that blessed peace and harmony which is more precious in families than all the goods of the world. M. Coulon will have told you how greatly M. de Coulanges and my daughter de Chantal desire that this union amongst us should be maintained, and that things should be arranged amicably and without delay ; of this I can assure you, dearest daughter, so pray think the matter over; for to tell me that you will give it all up if I so desire is not the point at all. If you have a just claim I have no wish that it should not be satisfied, this being only reasonable; but if you have none, which I think is the case, and that the title-deeds show it as plain as day, I would wish you to put in no claim, so that the affairs of this poor little child

may be arranged in peace. Should God take her to Himself you will then have wherewith to be satisfied. While awaiting the great comfort of seeing you, you ought, I think, to act conclusively in the matter.

Praying God to spread in abundance His holiest blessings upon you and upon our poor child, I remain, very dear daughter, notwithstanding all surmises to the contrary, in very truth and with my whole heart your Mother, who has for you that incomparable maternal love which God has given me and which by His grace will never grow less.

I salute M. de Saint-Satur, whose most humble servant I am.

Good-bye, my dearest daughter.

LXXIX.

Extract from a letter to Mother Favre.

Writing from Bourges, 1628, to Mother Favre, who had just been elected Superior of the Second Monastery of Paris, St Chantal says: " Your good Father (St. Vincent de Paul), for whom I feel so much reverence and affection, thanks me for the gift we have given him of you. This is, I think, to forstall your being taken away. I shall see to it with the Bishop of Geneva and with you yourself.

What a rogue you are! But all the more are you my truly loved daughter, for whom I have an incomparable affection. I send my salutations to whoever you wish. God be blessed!"

LXXX.

To Sister Anne Marguerite Clément at Orleans.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

DIJON, 1628.

Yes, indeed, my dearest daughter, God should be all in all to you. The one cherished good of the soul is to be alone with her God. Remain in this state of simple detachment, loving and obeying Our Lord in the person of your Superior and following blindly her guidance and her commands. I know full well that you have given me your heart and that God has lodged it in mine, and this is why I hope nothing may ever take it thence. Through His grace we have been trained in the same spirit and vocation in this world; may we continue together to love and praise the supreme Beloved of our souls for all eternity. Since God has deprived you of the power to use the intellectual faculties of your soul, do not attempt to do so, but acquiesce in His good pleasure. Be as a child in the arms of its nurse, letting God do just as He likes with you through holy obedience, and try little by little to forget self. I do not think there is any other means

of securing stable peace of soul than the giving oneself up absolutely, in order to be led and directed by obedience.

Yours, etc.

LXXXI.

To Mother Catherine-Charlotte de Crémaux de la Grange.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1629.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

The good gentleman* who is making your foundation at Condrieu manifests a great regard for it and much piety, courtesy, and humility in the articles of his foundation which I have seen. Indeed it is but reasonable to do all you can to please him. However, in regard to this first proposition of naming those whom he wishes to be received without a dowry, you must if possible arrange that the Sisters have the liberty to choose the subjects, lest those he names may not be suitable. This is an important point for the preservation of peace in our Institute, as usually those who present subjects have such a strong desire to see them received that, if they prove to have no vocations, the Sisters by sending them away make for themselves enemies instead of

* This foundation was made from Lyons by M. de Villars, whose brother, Mgr. de Villars, Archbishop of Vienne, presided at the installation of the Sisters at Condrieu, January 1st, 1630.

friends: so have a clear agreement on this point. It is quite necessary, in order not to be constrained to take those who are found to be unsuitable. The Book of Customs will afford light on this matter. . . .

As to the Fourth Article, the instruction of young girls. To take boarders is contrary to the spirit of our Institute. Our Blessed Father never approved of it. I do not know if you will find amongst his letters one which he wrote to a superior who had been approached on this subject by her Bishop. The Book of Customs permits indeed that three young girls, but not more, between the ages of ten and twelve, whose parents destine them for the Religious life, should be instructed and trained for it. If therefore one could manage to give satisfaction by arranging such instructions as they desire in the parlour to young girls, and to some friends, that could be done on feast-days, and on one day in the week besides, but to act otherwise would be contrary to the Institute. Such is my humble opinion, since you desire to have it.* We received

* The Little Sisters, of whom St. Jane Frances herself deemed it sometimes necessary to increase the numbers, have long since been superseded by small secular schools. The needs of the times, and the solicitations of the Bishops, under direct obedience to whom St. Francis wished his daughters always to remain, impelled the Mother Superiors of various monasteries, including that of Annecy, to deviate from the original design of the founders in so far as to open schools. But where this departure from the original Rule

your letters yesterday, and will answer them as soon as we can, but the bearer only gave us time to open them. We shall have the answers ready to send you on the first opportunity that presents itself.

LXXXII.

To M. Poiton, at Chambery.*

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
Feb. 2nd, 1630.

MY GOOD AND VERY DEAR BROTHER,

I have already thanked God for your safe return, and when writing to my Sister the Superior (of Chambery) sent you my good wishes. Now, while renewing them, I would like to tell you how very much I desire to see you and talk over some matters of interest with you, so I hope this poor

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is not found necessary, the houses continue to be purely contemplative. It is interesting to note that on the death-bed of the Venerable Mother Chappuis, her daughters desiring to know her dying wish in reference to their own school, she said: "It neither interferes with the silence, the regularity, nor the solitude of the Sisters, and is neither against the Rule, nor against the spirit of the Institute." We are told that at Troyes, where this venerable servant of God died, the Community, apart from the few engaged in teaching, was absolutely ignorant of what passed in the school, knowing neither the names nor the numbers of the school-children.

* The Convent lawyer.

town will soon be restored to entire liberty.* Meanwhile, dear brother, you will, with your usual kindness, take steps to accelerate the lawsuit against M. de la Ravoir, and this I very strongly recommend to you, as I am greatly astonished to see such apathy about an affair, that is so clear. It is now two years, or at least a year and a half, since the suit was begun, and it is of great importance to all our monasteries in Savoy. As to us here, if the judgment is not in our favour it will later entail a number of legal proceedings and annoyances, for many are awaiting the result of this case to go to law with us themselves. M. Fichet, who is at Chambery, has already done so, and hopes to deprive us of the dowry of his sister, who died here after a year and a day of profession. The ground upon which he bases his claim is, that, notwithstanding her profession, she made a will leaving everything to this monastery. You see, dear brother, how much the peace or trouble of our houses of Savoy, in regard to the Sisters' dowries, depends on the issue of M. Ravoir's case. If you can still procure legal approval of our exemption from the tax upon salt all our

* In the spring of this year (1630) the invading armies of Louis XIII. reached Annecy. The little town bravely but ineffectually resisted. On capitulation one of the clauses it stipulated, and which was granted by the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, was that the body of the venerable Francis de Sales should never be removed nor taken out of Annecy.

houses will be under fresh obligations to you, and, besides, you will be helping towards our Sisters' buildings while awaiting the time when you can help us to build our church.

Pray convey my remembrances to the Commander Baldain. I never write to him because letters only worry him, and, besides, I am myself so overwhelmed with letters and business, owing to the number of our monasteries that correspond with this one, that I am hardly able to get through it all. From day to day we are expecting the removal of the restrictions on this town, after which we shall converse with leisure, fully and freely. I beseech Our Lord to shed upon you His choicest blessings. Recommending myself to your good prayers, believe me with the same affection that I always have for you,

Yours, etc.

LXXXIII.

To Dom Galice, Barnabite Father at Montargis.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
February, 1630.

MY REV. FATHER,

May the love of our Divine Saviour be the life of your soul. . . .

I am very incompetent to give a useful answer to your letter in reference to my Sister the Superior of Montargis:* I beg of Our Lord to enlighten me that

* Mother Anne Marguerite Clément.

what I say may be in accordance with His good pleasure. In the spiritual life of this Sister I have always seen many traits of special communication from God. Her humility is genuine, her charity towards her neighbour practical, her manner of treating with her Superiors straight and simple, and she has a real love of mortification, and of the practice of virtue. These are solid dispositions and such as are usually favoured by God. He has, I see, given your Reverence so clear and discerning a light in regard to the workings of grace in this soul and so much wisdom and counsel in guiding her that we can but look on with silent admiration. All I have to say is that I have never seen anything clearer, more simple, humble, and artless, than the terms, in which, with such lucidity, she manifests the operations of God in her, and the activities of her own soul. To me it is impossible to believe that she is moved by any other than the Spirit of God. It is said that we know the tree by its fruit, and as her tree brings forth the fruit of solid virtue there is nothing, I think, to fear. With your approval, my very dear Father, I venture to say that the suitable accompaniment to such great favours is interior recollection and self-humiliation. She writes to me somewhat fully of her feelings. I reply briefly, but, as I think, sufficiently. Let her pay little attention to what passes in her, and fix the eyes of her mind on the unity and simplicity of the presence of God,

leaving it to do its own work. As to communion, your Reverence will allow it to her as your prudence and discretion dictate. I am told that the Bishop of Sens is a man of a very interior spirit and of great piety. If he visits this convent it would be well, I have been thinking, subject to your approval, to let him know what passes in this dear soul: this would give us much light, or at any rate it would give us confidence. I am quite of your opinion that it would be well for her to write what passes within her.

LXXXIV.

To the Same.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
August, 1630.

MY REV. FATHER,

My dear Sister, the Superior, is very happy to be privileged to receive so many graces in such a spirit of deep humility and detachment. This is the touchstone by which to prove that they are from God, and which keeps in security the soul of the recipient. She serves truly a good Master; yet I am always of the same opinion that she ought not to be too much carried away by these affections for fear that in weakening the body they might unfit her for the duties of her charge. It would be well for her to restrain her emotions so as to keep them in the superior part of her soul and thus prevent an over-

flow on the body: this is a safer way. To hear from time to time of what passes within her would, my very dear Father, be an immense consolation to me: say, for instance, towards the end of the year, or as your Reverence judges best.

LXXXV.

To Mother Anne Marguerite Clément, Superior at Montargis.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1631.

I am very well satisfied, my dearest daughter, with the favourable opinion of your Bishop as to your dealings with God. Blessed for ever be He who is so infinitely good as to deign to communicate Himself in such plenitude to His poor and unworthy creature.

My daughter, there is nothing for me to say on this head. Do faithfully whatever your worthy Bishop desires you to do. You have only to look at God and to let Him work, completely forgetting yourself in Him. Since He in His love permits you to speak to Him so lovingly and familiarly I pray you, dearest daughter, present to Him sometimes my miserable little heart, humbly beseeching Him to make it entirely His, to strip it of all that does not find favour in His sight, and to give it the grace to do and suffer all things whatsoever that His good pleasure wills.

Earnestly recommend to Him our poor little Congregation, that His spirit may reign therein, and commend me often to His most holy love. Do this so heartily that I may feel the effects in as full a measure as His adorable will permits. Give me always your sweet affection in that holy love. I have read the two pages of your letter regarding your interior state, upon which I say nothing, save to praise God for the graces and lights that He vouchsafes to you. It is not for the creature to use empty and insipid words when the Creator Himself deigns to speak.

LXXXVI.

To Sister Marie Denise Goubert, of the First Monastery of Lyons.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1631.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

I have read and re-read your letter, at the end of which you beg of me to tell you if you are deceiving yourself in the belief which you hold as strong as an article of faith (to begin with, it is a grave fault to believe one's imagination in the same way as one believes an article of faith) that your spirit is lost in God, as you describe it to be. Now I tell you plainly, with my wonted sincerity, that I believe you are deceiving yourself; for true lowliness is not made up in the imagination, nor does it

consist in having many affections and lights to discourse on such things as you do. When one sees such lights in a soul dead to self it gives great consolation. But, my daughter, your are very far from such happiness, for you are bristling with self-love. Try to acquire genuine humility, which consists in the death or the allaying of your passions, inclinations, sentiments: your presumption, vanity, and self-love; having achieved this you must labour constantly and perseveringly by a continual mortification of your whole being. Begin by retrenching the vain flights of your imaginations and the activity of your understanding. I would wish you not to be so subtle in your questions.

In a word, my daughter, you must become truly humble and really mortified, and then God will live and reign in you. Take the advice and follow the guidance of your good Mother, and God will bless you. That God may do so is my prayer to Him.

I remain, in His holy love,

Yours, etc.

LXXXVII.

To Dom Galice, Barnabite Father at Montargis.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1632.

VERY REV. FATHER,

I most humbly thank you for the trouble you have taken in writing me so full an account of what it has pleased Our Lord in His goodness to operate

in this privileged soul,* and of the favourable judgement which the Archbishop of Sens and the Rev. Fathers de Condren and de Suffren have formed of her. I do not think that it would be advisable at present to seek further evidence, lest, as you say, the peace of her spirit might thereby be disturbed. As for me, knowing as I have done for a long time the true humility, simplicity, and sincerity of this soul, it seems to me almost impossible to doubt that what passes in her is from God. From her infancy, preventing graces have been evident in her—graces quite exceptional in one of her age; and when received into this house she, from the very first, manifested in all her actions the true virtues of religion, and as she can herself tell your Reverence, God led her by very rare lights and sentiments of devotion to seek Him alone. I see by her letter to me that she does not wish to remain inactive, and this comes from the ardent desire that she has to please God. But I think, my Rev. Father, that all she has to do is to leave herself in Our Lord's hands, simply regarding Him without the distraction of any other thought. God will give you the light requisite for the guidance of this holy soul, since He has placed her under your care and direction. Indeed she is fortunate in having met your Reverence, who takes such a paternal interest in her, and there is good reason to praise God. The divine Goodness will recompense

* Mother Anne Marguerite Clément.

you abundantly, besides which I believe, very Rev. Father, that this charge is light and comforting to you. Do not forget to remember in the Holy Sacrifice her who desires for you the most pure love of our Lord, and who is truly,

Yours, etc.

LXXXVIII.

To Sister Marie Aimée de Morville, at Moulins.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1632.

I have just come from holy communion, my dearest daughter, at which I blessed and thanked the God of infinite goodness for the loud call with which He has been pleased to bid you turn back to Him, and I besought Him with all the energy of my soul to keep so firm a hold upon you that nothing ever again may draw you away. For this I hope, dearest daughter, through His grace and your faithful co-operation. I cannot but think that your heart is too good ever to forget His superabundant mercies to you. Ponder often on that counsel given by both the Princes of the Apostles; Labour in fear and trembling by good works to make sure your vocation.* Your past miserable experience ought

* "Labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." 2 Pet. i. 10.

"With fear and trembling work your own salvation." Phil. ii. 12.

surely to make you tremble, and fearful of again falling, and very watchful in avoiding all occasions of temptation, especially those which you know to be most prejudicial, such as conversations, intimacies, affections, and communications with the outside world, and even with spiritual persons unless rarely and from true necessity. Then will it be your delight to find contentment in the instructions you will receive from the good Mother (Marie Angélique de Bigny), who has a singular love for you, and is besides both capable and full of charity. Her tears, fasts, austerities, and prayers so frequently offered to God on your behalf will, I doubt not, have touched His heart, and helped to achieve your conversion. To her will be given without fail every help requisite for your happiness, and by means of her will His Goodness lead you in the straight path. I have a strong belief that those who submit not themselves to the guidance of their Superiors submit not to God. In a word, apply yourself to do rather than to learn; this is my wish for you. We have in abundance holy and solid instructions in the Institute. For none better could we wish, and none are better adapted to lead us to the great perfection that our vocation demands. May the study and the practice of them henceforth be your delight. To this I conjure you so that by means of them you may offer to the divine Goodness fruits worthy of His mercy and to the Institute the perfume of a

holy and sincere conversion. Thus will be assuaged the sorrow and shame that by your past disorders you have made it suffer, and all our hearts will be filled with consolation. So much do I feel consoled by the generous acts you have made* that my displeasure at the past is all gone, and I assure you you are now within my heart, where I cherish you most truly and affectionately, and believe me

* In the early part of the summer of this year, 1632, says the Mother de Chaugy, "it pleased God to open the eyes of the Benefactress of our monastery of Moulins by means of a dream. One night she dreamt that she saw a torch suddenly extinguished by someone at the moment it seemed to be trying to give forth more light. Taking this as a divine warning that her life would, when she least expected it, be thus suddenly extinguished, it evoked a keen remorse for her past conduct. She sought her Superior, and with every mark of genuine sorrow begged, for God's sake, to be permitted once more to enter the novitiate, of which petition the good Mother warmly approved. Sister Marie Aimée, now desiring to make public reparation for the scandal she had given, asked to do so at the open grille. This was allowed, and having there renewed her profession, she tore up the document containing the list of privileges which had been granted to her as Benefactress and Co-foundress with Madame de Gouffier. At the same time she begged to be allowed the favour of living as a simple religious, while confessing herself unworthy of such a grace. From this time she became the consolation and the edification of all her Sisters, an example of fidelity to the holy Rule, and for fifteen months her obedience, mortification, and piety were all that could be desired. At the end of that time the dream which had wrought her conversion was verified. She was taken suddenly ill, and had only time, before passing from this life, to implore the mercy of Him who came to save the repentant sinner."

you will receive from all of the Institute and from me nothing but proofs of love and affection.

I think it would be well some months hence, when you have given yourself time to test your perseverance, that you should give testimony of it to the houses of the Institute by some humbly written note, to make satisfaction for your past misconduct. You have done well, dearest daughter, in giving yourself unreservedly to God. His Providence will not fail you nor permit you to be in want of anything. If the good sister who used to serve you is worthy of the favour you desire for her, most willingly can it be granted, but not till she has proved her perseverance in well-doing for some years. I pray God to shed abundantly upon you the assistance of His grace.

LXXXIX.

To M. de Coysia, Counsellor to the Royal Senate of Savoy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
19th March, 1633.

Alas ! Sir, what is this that I have just heard ? That you are arrested and charged with fresh accusations ! Our good God, in permitting so much affliction, can have no other design than by it to make you conformable to His beloved Son our most gentle Redeemer. If you shut your eyes to the

things of earth and open them to eternal truths this tribulation, accepted with loving and patient submission, will, in the end, work a weight of glory and bring you solid peace. One single spark of this true honour is worth more, a million times, than all the prosperity that the world could offer, which, as you know, Sir, is all deceit and illusion. Ponder well over the accusations with which the most holy Son of the Eternal Father was charged, the pains that He suffered, followed as they were by a terrible and ignominious death. You are not more innocent than He. And all this He suffered for you, for me, for all ungrateful men, because it was the good pleasure of His Eternal Father, with a love, patience, and humility incomprehensible to us. So do you, Sir, seek to imitate this portion of His Passion. Lovingly embrace His will. Resign yourself absolutely to it. Place yourself and all your affairs in His hands, so that He may dispose of all according to His good pleasure. . . .

I need not assure you of our prayers: both affection and duty claim them. May Our Lord be the joy and consolation of Madame, my most dear sister, and of yourself.

Always sincerely your very humble servant.

Feast of the glorious Saint Joseph, to whom I recommend you with all my heart.

XC.

To the Countess de Toulonjon, at Pignerol.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1633.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

I hear that God is about to give you again the blessing of motherhood, and I like to console myself with the hope that you thank Him for this grace and for all the prosperity you enjoy, taking all from His hand who sends you these good things, not to be employed in pomp and vain display, but to make you advance in holy humility and loving fear of Him. Tell me, daughter, and tell me quite honestly and frankly, what are your sentiments upon this point ? for I always have a certain dread that the atmosphere of this world's affluence and honours may smother us if we do not keep well before our minds the thought of their instability, the certainty that we must one day leave them, and the uncertainty of the coming of that day. Think often of death and of the blessed eternity those will enjoy who value true happiness above all perishable things. Impress these truths on your daughter, for they are the best and most permanent heritage that you can give her. Make her dearly prize the happiness of living in the holy love of God, and in the fear of

offending Him. These things, as you know, I have always, from your tenderest years, striven to engrave on your heart, and especially did I advise you to fulfil all your duties towards your husband, as God ordains. This advice I now reiterate. You should give him all the satisfaction in your power. Tell me also your thoughts on this point. Ah ! for the love of God, daughter, let not your head be turned by the honours and good things which you have in such abundance. I am told that you have become sarcastic. Believe me, dearest daughter, it is by Christian modesty and a gentle and gracious manner to all that you ought to make yourself known. Turning others into ridicule is not becoming in one of your position and age. Try to conquer and attract hearts by the means I have just pointed out, and to surpass all in prudence and holy reticence of action. Take this advice from your mother, who loves you and desires to see you altogether perfect in your station. May God give you the grace to be so !

XCI.

To Mgr. André Frémyot, formerly Archbishop of Bourges (the Saint's brother).

ON THE DEATH OF HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, MME. DE CHANTAL.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1633.

MY VERY HONOURED LORD,

We have but to adore with profound submission the will of our good God, and lovingly to kiss the rod with which He chastises His elect. Yes, indeed, notwithstanding all the repugnance of nature, I praise and thank Him a thousand times, because He is our good God, who sends us with the same love joys and sorrows, and even for the most part causes greater profit to come to us through affliction than through prosperity. Yet is it not strange that knowing and experiencing this we should feel so keenly as we do the death of those we love?—for I own to you that upon opening the little note that announced the death of my poor dear daughter I was so overcome that had I been standing I think I should have fallen. I never remember any previous sorrow to have had the effect of this

* The young Baroness de Chantal died August 20th, 1633, and was buried in the vault at the Visitation Monastery, Rue St. Antoine.

note upon me. O! my Jesus! What a climax of grief it has been to my poor feeble heart and how your trouble has added to mine! It is most natural that you should feel it as you do, and at your age too; what a sweetness and support you have lost in this daughter who so lovingly looked after your health and every want of yours. All this makes me suffer more than I can say, for whatever touches you touches me acutely. But when I reflect that by means of these privations, lovingly accepted, our good God wishes to be Himself everything to us, and that the least advance we make in His love is worth more than all the world with all its joys, and that in those sharp trials which deprive us of our sweetest pleasure He prizes above all the union of our will with His—truly, I say, when I consider these things, I find myself impelled to acknowledge that the more sorrows that come upon one the more is one favoured by God. I hope that before now you will yourself have received this light and found comfort in it. First emotions [of grief], my beloved and dearest Lord, are inevitable, and our sweet Saviour is not offended by them. But I trust that after them He will abundantly fill you with consolations; this I pray for unceasingly. Distract yourself as much as you can and let the confident hope that we shall be united in a blessed eternity fortify you. The virtuous life and holy death of our dearly loved daughter gives strong hope that in

God's mercy she is already in this enjoyment. We are after all here only to prepare for future happiness, and the sooner we possess it the happier for us.

I am writing to M. and Mme. de Coulanges, to whom this terrible loss must have been a great blow. I believe they will take into their heart the poor little orphan* and always keep her there. Verily when my thoughts turn to her I have to hold them in. I trust that God, to whom I confide her, will be Father and Protector to her, and I give her up to the care of the Blessed Virgin with all my heart.

Our Sisters of both Convents upon this occasion have forgotten nothing. Besides their own love for the dear deceased they also felt very much for your sorrow in her loss and for mine. There is some comfort in knowing that she is to be left, with the heart of my poor son, in the care of the Sisters. Your judge of Nantua told me the other day that you are at N. I was very glad, my dear Lord, to hear it, as it will help to give you the distraction that you ought to seek.

My Lord,

Yours, etc.

* Marie de Chantal, afterwards Mme. de Sévigné.

XCII.

*To a blind Sister.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

[Date not given.]

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER,

Your letter consoles me, for it tells me with what patience you have accepted your cross, and what profit, by your submission to the good pleasure of God, you are drawing from it. He, it may be, deprives you of the light of the body in order to make you more abundantly enjoy that of the spirit, and this is a great motive for blessing Him. As a saint once said to one who was blind and very holy : " There is nothing to be proud of in bodily sight; we have it in common with the beasts; but we may well rejoice in God's having given us the interior light by which we see and know His goodness." I am very glad that our good Sisters are so affectionately attentive in their care of you, as this gives you pleasure. I envy them in having the opportunity, for, I must tell you, what will perhaps console you. I have always set very little value on corporal sight, being of opinion that, except for the reading of good books and somebody's else's devotions, it is a hindrance rather than a help in the spiritual life, so it is almost more desirable to be without it than to enjoy

* From " Sainte Chantal : Pensées et Lettres." P. Téqui, 29, rue de Tournon, Paris. 1899.

it, as in its absence the interior sight remains firmer, more purified from external objects, and more solidly fixed on God. This is indeed the only thing, it seems to me, worth desiring. If, nevertheless, you feel inspired to ask your cure of God, do so, but always with your former resignation, and pray for her who is all, etc.

XCIII.

*To Sister Bonne Marie de Haraucourt at Nancy.**

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1633.

God bless you, my dearest daughter, for the good news you send me of the convalescence of the good prelate. . . .

* Sister Bonne Marie de Haraucourt, whose memory is venerated in the Visitation Order, spent her youth in the midst of the gaieties of the Court of Lorraine without ever reflecting that she had a Jesus to imitate or a heaven to gain. On terms of intimacy with the Duchess Nicloe, wife of Charles IV., this girl became intoxicated with the flattery by which she was surrounded because of her beauty and her wit, when of a sudden the same words that converted the great Arsenius, "Fuge, Tace, Quiesce,"* fell upon her ear. The arrival of St. Jane Frances in Lorraine at the moment (1626) was propitious, and the young Court favourite made no delay in answering the call. With mingled feelings of joy at the thought of the great sacrifice, and of dread of what it entailed, she offered herself to the Saint. Soon after the arrival of Mademoiselle de Haraucourt at the Visitation of Pont-a-Mousson, the flower of the younger ladies of the Court, captivated by her example,

* Fly, be silent and be at peace.

To return to yourself, whom I so dearly love. Repose in peace in your state of spiritual poverty. Blessed are the poor, for God will reclothe them. How happy should we be if our hearts were stript of all that is not God, and if we loved so to be. What a blessed thing it is to be in obscurity, with no devotion, no spiritual enlightenment, no consolation from creatures. Oh, my daughter, when a soul finds herself in this state, what can she do save hide herself like a little fledgeling, and nestle under the wing of her good mother Providence, remaining hidden there, not venturing to come out for fear the kite might capture her—this, then, is your place of

followed her there, where, regardless of the opinion of the world, they led a life hidden with God. After seven years of solitude and prayer, Sister Bonne Marie was sent to help Mother P. J. Favrot in the reform of the Penitentiary at Nancy, and she obtained leave to found there a Convent of her own Order, with the holy desire to perpetuate in this town, where she feared to have so much offended in the past, a homage of unceasing reparation.

The Princes of Lorraine, and the Court, cherished and protected the new foundation, but soon after, the horrors of the Swedish war and the consequent departure of the Princess, left the little Community in a most pitiable state of destitution. Elected Superior at this critical time, Sister Bonne Marie, by the heroism of her faith, wrought wonders equal to those of great miracle-workers amongst the Saints. When no longer Superior, this holy Nun, by the force of her example, was the life and soul of her Convent at Nancy, as she had been the joy and support of Mother Favrot at Pont-a-Mousson. She died February 26th, 1666. (*Année Sainte*, Vol. II).

repose where there is naught to fear, and in what better place could you be? And what richer clothing could you have than to be covered beneath the shelter of the sweet providence of your heavenly Father? Dwell there, and be well content to possess this singular privilege. You know, my daughter, that you have a place in my heart from which no one can ever dislodge you.

Yours, etc.

XCIV.

To Sister Paule Jéronyme de Monthoux, Sister Deposed, at Blois.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1633.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Your letter by which I see that you are in the midst of suffering fills me with compassion. However, the Superior† being such as she is, I do not think it desirable to remove you at present, for your absence would, I fear, make matters worse.

You ought to follow faithfully the attraction you mention in your last letter of wishing to live in profound humility in order to imitate more perfectly the divine Saviour who was subject not only to His Father but to His children, to His creatures. As you know, they did not treat Him well, but with

* In the Visitation Order the former Superior upon the election of her successor is called "Sister Deposed."

† Mother Marie Michel Gervain was not re-elected.

infinite contempt and opprobium, and all this suffering He bore without complaint. If, then, you have the courage to suffer in humility, sweetness, patience, silence, all that presents itself to you, I most truly believe that by so doing you will become holy, that your service will be agreeable to the divine Majesty, will work great good to the Institute, and in particular to your own house.

These little things you mention to me, that the Mother does not wash the dishes, and does not sweep, I should take no notice of, except to bring them to her notice just once in a casual way and humbly. But when you remark important things, tell her of them with gentleness and affection, and try to win her heart, for if you once gain that you can do as you will with her. Neglect nothing that you think could further this end. With my pen as with my whole heart I beseech you to do all you possibly can to remedy this evil. You see how it is, beloved daughter; the older Sisters do not like to be the fault-finders. I gather this from their letters, and I see also that they fail in humility and respect towards the Mother. Certainly when a Sister, whoever she may be, is in charge as Mother, the same obedience and respect should be given to her as to her predecessor. To act otherwise is to prove that we have no virtue and that we do not, as is our duty, regard God in the creature. So should it be when she is in office. And when she is no longer Superior

let us cherish her as a sister, and keeping ourselves in humility, meddle as little as possible with anything. If it is requisite to admonish it ought to be done with such respect and charity that no harm can come of it. In a word, as you would wish that others should act towards you if you were Superior, so do you to them. I assure you, dearest daughter, it grieves me more than I can tell you when I know that the newly elected Mothers and the Sisters deposed are not in harmony; for it is clear as noonday that this comes from a want of humility. Wherever such a misfortune exists it is the ruin of peace and of the observance of the Rule, and that house is no longer held in good esteem.

May God put His hand to this reformation. If I outlive my term of office I am resolved to keep myself so much in the background, and so ignorant of the affairs of the house that I can give umbrage to no one. Should I see wrong I shall certainly speak of it, but with all possible gentleness and humility, and having done so, if it is not put right I shall hold my tongue until the [Ecclesiastical] Superior's visit, then I shall simply represent the matter without exaggeration to him. To conclude, dearest daughter, do everything God suggests to you for the good of your Convent and for peace. Charity remedies all things. I am writing a long letter to the (Mother) Superior. Receive all I say as coming from a heart that only desires your good, and is entirely,

Yours. etc

XCV.

*To M. Noël Brulart, the Commander de Sillery.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

[Date not given.]

Now see, my most dear Brother, how you have fallen into the state to which I always feared your great fervour would reduce you. And yet you say that you fear to flatter yourself and are not sufficiently on your guard against your own cowardliness. My true Father, for the love of God make no such reflections: for believe me all these little apprehensions that you are not doing enough are not half so

* Noël Brulart, Commander of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (better known in the correspondence of St. Jane Frances as the Commander de Sillery), after a brilliant career at Court, where as Ambassador to the courts of Spain and Rome he displayed all the pride and splendour that his great revenues enabled him to gratify, fell under the influence of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Visitation Nuns, by whom he was excited to a higher ambition, and in 1632, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, giving up his worldly career, became a Priest and consecrated his wealth to relieving the unfortunate and furthering the interests of religion. A generous benefactor to the Visitation Order, amongst many other gifts he built the Church of the first monastery of Paris (designed by Mansard), where he was buried. It is now, alas ! the Protestant temple of the Rue St. Antoine, near the Bastille. Commander de Sillery closed a life of rare sanctity on the 26th Sep., 1640, in the sixty-third year of his age. The above letter is taken from the "Lettres de Ste Jeanne Françoise Frémoit de Chantal." Tournei edition. J. Casterman, 1848.

pleasing to God as would be your submission in accepting the relief you require both for body and mind. God only wants your heart. Our uselessness and powerlessness when lovingly accepted through reverence and devotion to His most holy will are more agreeable to Him than if we were perpetually doing violence to ourselves by great works of penance. Indeed, as you know, it is the height of perfection to will in regard to ourselves as God wills. And since He has given you a delicate constitution He wishes you to take care of it, so do not want to exact from it what He in His gentleness does not ask. A mild and tranquil inaction is what He requires of you, resting near Him, without paying any attention whatsoever either to the suggestions of your understanding or the movements of your will, unless it be to say some words of love, fidelity, and simple acquiescence offered gently and tranquilly without effort, and without desire to feel consolation or satisfaction in them. This practised with peace and repose of spirit will be very agreeable to God, more so, I think, than anything else you could do. Bear this state then, letting it take the place of the excessive application of mind which has reduced you to your present condition. Just one word more. Believe me, if instead of the four or five hours which you spend every day on your knees you would spend one hour—that is a quarter of an hour after rising, another in preparation for holy Mass, the same in

thanksgiving, and one short quarter for the evening examen—that should be quite sufficient. Try for the love of God, by repose of body and mind, and by taking plenty of good nourishing food, to regain your former strength. If I did not feel it my duty to make this request I should not be writing to you so soon. And I trust through your goodness and all your fatherliness towards us that, for our consolation, you will not overlook anything which you feel may help towards your recovery, or that you think will make you stronger in the future. I have not written to our charming and lovable dearest daughter,* because she does not know of your illness.

A word to the good mother, who, though we write seldom to each other, I know to be so dear to you in Our Lord.

I pray God in His mercy to preserve you for many years for the service of His glory and the happiness of our Congregation. Amen.

I am, Sir,

Yours, etc.

XCVI.

To the Countess de Toulonjon, at Alonne.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1634.

I see by your letter that you are in great grief, and it touches me deeply. There is no doubt about

* Presumably Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre.

it, your troubles are great, and viewed in this world's judgement they are of a very distressing nature. But look up, above these low and wretched passing things, to that blessed eternity in which is to be found great and endless consolation, and you will be glad that those for whom you mourn are in the happy possession of it, and a sweet peace will fill your heart amidst the vicissitudes of this mortal life. Ah! when shall we give a little reflection to these truths of faith? When shall we, dearest daughter, relish the sweetness of the divine will? When shall we see in all that happens to us the good pleasure of God? Whether He sends prosperity or adversity, He intends all equally for our greater good, and gives all with a love which to us is incomprehensible. But, miserable creatures that we are, we turn into poison the remedies meant for our cure. Let us not do this any more, rather let us lovingly submit like obedient children and co-operate with the designs of our heavenly Father, whose only aim in sending us affliction is to unite us more intimately to Himself. If we so act, He will be all to us, He will take the place of brother, son, husband, mother, of all things. Take courage from these strengthening thoughts. I pray Our Lord to give you a knowledge of the rich treasures which He, in His goodness, shuts up in the afflictions He sends us.

XCVII.

*Extract from a letter to M. Noël Brulart, the Commander de Sillery, at Paris.**

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1634.

The state of your mind, which you narrate with so much simplicity, is incomparably better and safer than if you were overflowing with consolations and sensible love of God. This interior peace, this stability in God, these lights, which although slight, transient, and devoid of definite reasoning, yet retain the soul in the state in which God has placed her, are all infallible marks that He reigns in you, and give great hope that His goodness desires to lead you in a wholly intellectual way to a state of great purity and simplicity; hence you should, I think, my dearest brother, seek no other devotion than looking unto God purely and simply, and letting Him accomplish His will in you. This Divine Saviour being the only object of your affections and desires, the solitary pleasure of your heart, all that He will accomplish in you will be for His greater glory, and for your own sanctification. Be, then, as content to be powerless, idle, dry, and arid

* Taken from the "Life of Noël Brulart de Sillery," Paris, at the Monastery of the Visitation of Holy Mary, Rue d'Enfer-Saint-Michel, 72. 1843.

before God, as if you were actively at work, and in the enjoyment of His gifts of devotion and contentment. As all consists in union with God one state ought to be as pleasing to you as another. Age and health no longer permitting you to be active, you will apparently have to spend the remainder of your days in this heavenly exercise by which your mind will be renewed. So will you be uninterruptedly employed in the love and repose of God, and I believe that the fruit which will result therefrom will enrich your soul, give glory to His divine Majesty, and even edification to your neighbour, for this salutary exercise teaches contempt of all earthly things, and is a great proof to the world of the true piety and happiness that are to be so completely found in God.

XCVIII.

To the Countess de Toulonjon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

1634.

You wish, my very dear daughter, to have in writing my desires in your regard. Here they are.*

* These counsels had been given verbally by St. Jane Frances to Madame de Toulonjon at the time of her sojourn at Annecy, where she came to pass the first months of her widowhood, and the Saint at the request of her daughter wrote them down for her so that she might be able often to read them over, and thus more faithfully adhere to her mother's pious recommendations.

The strongest longing I have is that you should live as a true Christian widow, modest in dress, reserved in action, and above all in conversation. On this account you must avoid having to do with vain and worldly young men. If you do otherwise, my dearest daughter, although by the grace of God I hold your virtue to be unapproachable and feel surer of it than of my own, it might easily be sullied, and your conduct would surely be criticised when it became known that you receive such persons and take pleasure in their society. I beseech of you, trust me in this. Your honour and my own and my peace of mind are involved. I know well that there is no living in this world without some sharing in the pleasures it offers, but, believe me, you will never find stable enjoyment save in God, in virtue, and in a just and reasonable attention to the education of your children, to the management of their affairs, and to the care of your household. If you seek it elsewhere you will have a thousand tribulations of heart and mind. Well do I know this. I would not have you refuse the lawful pleasure that is to be found in the upright conversation of the virtuous and in their visits, although in the circumstances in which God has placed you it would be desirable to receive visitors but rarely. In a word, dearest child, for God's glory, for the love and reverence you owe to the memory of your dear husband, for the preservation of your good name, and the edification of your

daughter, who, without doubt, models herself upon you, you must keep your inclinations a little in check, submitting them to God, to reason, to your own well-being and to that of your children. You must also bear in mind what is due and becoming to your birth and your condition and to the comfort of your neighbours. You will be greatly helped in this by faithfully following the little practices of devotion of which I have spoken to you, and which I will now again set down.

Upon awakening in the morning, turn your thoughts to God present everywhere, and place your heart and your whole being in the hands of His goodness. Then think briefly on the good that it will be in your power to do that day, and the evil you should avoid, above all on that defect to which you are most subject, resolving by the grace of God to do good and avoid evil. Having risen from bed, kneel on your bed, or elsewhere, and adore God from the depths of your soul, thanking His goodness for all the graces and benefits that He has bestowed upon you, for a moment's reflection will show you how you are surrouded by His mercies and what a special care He has had of you. This thought ought indeed to touch your heart, which offer Him anew with your resolutions, affections, thoughts, words and works of that day, in union with that sacred offering which our divine Saviour made of Himself upon the tree of the cross, and ask Him for

His holy grace and assistance to guide you through the day. Beg afterwards for His holy blessing with that of the Blessed Virgin, of your good angel and your holy patrons, saluting them by a simple inclination of the head and an interior act of reverence. All this can be done in the space of two Paters and Aves. Next, do not waste time over your toilette. As far as possible assist at holy Mass every day as attentively and devoutly as you can by using such holy considerations as are taught in Philothea.* If you cannot be present at Mass hear it spiritually as the same book teaches. Philothea ought to be your book of predilection and your spiritual guide. Either during holy Mass, if you cannot give other time, or at some other hour, withdraw a little into some quiet place every morning, and make about a quarter of an hour's prayer from your heart, placing yourself in God's presence, or at His sacred feet, or at those of the most holy Virgin, as a daughter before her father or her dear mother, and converse with the divine Majesty in humble, filial confidence. Do this either by reflecting on some mystery of Faith, or in accordance with some need you may have, or as your mind suggests. Conclude all by an act of great desire of loving and pleasing God, renewing your holy resolutions and invoking His grace. Let your chief care be to do everything with purity of

* "The Introduction to a Devout Life," by St. Francis de Sales, Chapter XIV. of the second part.

intention, and often offer up your actions to God by holy affections, frequently calling to mind His goodness as He will suggest or your own heart will dictate.

Read every day for a quarter or half an hour some spiritual book, preferably Philothea. Before supper, either walking about or retiring apart, place yourself in the hands of God by some holy aspirations. Before going to bed examine your conscience and, prostrate before God, adore, thank, and invoke Him, offering Him your soul. If you are able, add the Litany of Our Lady, your attendants making the responses. Communicate at least on each first Sunday of the month and on the chief feasts, such as those of Our Lord, and our Lady, and the feast of St. Joseph, to whom I wish you to be devout.

Try to subdue your passions and bring them and your inclinations under the law of reason and of the holy will of God: otherwise you will never have anything but trouble and uneasiness of soul. God permits or sends to His predestined children, for their good and as a means of bringing them to His glorious beatitude, the afflictions and contradictions of this life. My dearest daughter, if you are so happy as sweetly and patiently to accept all that He sends, then be assured you will begin to taste even here on earth something of the delights of the blessed eternity of glory. But for this you must serve God willingly and love Him supremely, seeking

His pleasure, choosing His divine will through holy obedience in preference to your own will, desires, or inclinations.

May God in His sweet goodness grant you this grace, dearest daughter; I unceasingly implore it of Him from my heart, which is that of one who loves you as her own with her entire capacity for loving. Amen.

XCIX.

To Sister Marie Aimée de Rabutin, Mistress of Novices at Annecy.*

Vive ✠ Jésus !

PARIS, 1635.

DAUGHTER DEAR,

You attribute everything to your negligence ! Accept the good that comes to you, and when God withdraws Himself do not run after Him. You are always doing His will provided you keep yourself

* Marie Aimée de Rabutin possessed all the caustic wit for which the de Rabutins were distinguished, and had no other thought than of pleasure and of her independence, until St. Jane Frances won her to Christ. "Make haste, my daughter," she said to her, "for God is the enemy of delay." From the entrance of Mademoiselle de Rabutin into the Monastery of Annecy (1624) her fervour was without bounds, and were it not for obedience her austerities would have shortened her life. When she was elected Superior at Thonon St. Jane Frances said to the outsister who came to fetch her: "Make the most of the time your new Superior rules you, for you have never had and perhaps never will have her equal." She governed several monasteries

under His hand without desiring anything whatsoever save to do His will. These doubts against Faith that you tell me of He permits so that you may make frequent acts of this virtue. For you see, my daughter, He only sends temptations to souls whom He intends to raise to high perfection. All the doubts and fears lest you may have consented come from the evil spirit. Pay no heed to them, unless to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for I am at peace in God."

C.

To M. Noël Brulart, Commander de Sillery, at Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

VALENCE,
2nd July, 1636.

MY MOST HONOURED, BELOVED, AND DEAREST FATHER,

I certainly have no wish to delay in answering your kind and cordial letter, which gives such a lucid account of the finale of this wicked affair*, and

and died in 1678. Her praises are summed up in these words of St. Jane Frances: "When once Mother Marie Aimée returns to Annecy she must not be taken away again, for although she is my relative, I cannot help saying that she has always been a living rule and a model of perfect observance." (Archives of the Visitation, Annecy.)

* We quote the following extract from the "History of the Foundation of the Visitation Order":

above all of the good odour of those little servants of the Lord, our Sisters of the Faubourg, and of the reparation made to them. Oh! how good God is! and how prompt in coming by ways which confound the prudence of the worldly-wise to the succour of the innocent. For the greatness of His mercies may He be for ever blessed! You must have been deeply moved in the goodness of your heart on witnessing such a marked and fatherly interposition of Providence in this grave crisis. Truly happy are the souls who repose entirely in the pitying and loving bosom of this heavenly Father. You cannot think what this grace has wrought in my heart

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"A person of good social position had, it is said, borrowed a very large sum of money from the Second monastery of the Visitation at Paris, promising immediately to send a written acknowledgement of this loan, and to repay it at the end of a fortnight. But upon receiving the money he at once absconded. Informed of his departure, Mother Marie Agnes Le Roy took active steps to recover the money, which was the entire capital of her community. The immediate result of her inquiries was that the affair became public, and the friends of the accused, who were very numerous, all took his part and spread the grossest calumnies against the victims of his treachery. But God taking charge of their defence providentially brought back to Paris the culprit, who thus fell into the hands of those who were seeking him. He made restitution, in so far as to acknowledge with confusion that he had taken the money, intending to speculate with it, but he appears to have been unable to restore to the Convent the entire sum."

The Nuns claimed no other punishment for him than the avowal of his discreditable conduct.

towards God, whom we can never sufficiently thank for it, and towards you, my very dear Father, for the incomparable assistance which you have given these poor daughters of mine. It is quite impossible to express to you what I feel, and always shall feel, for the succour and the support in all our necessities which God has given us through you is a priceless treasure from which we draw both spiritual and temporal profit. May the sweet Saviour bless you with His richest graces and recompense you with His divine love. My poor Sisters needed this experience so that they might learn to trust themselves entirely to your paternal care. They have written to me expressing their gratitude and begging of me to help them to return you fitting thanks. It is a sweet Providence, I cannot but think, that has permitted the evil act of that miserable man, so that by means of it a more complete union should be established between our two monasteries (of Paris), and that Our Lord should have made use of you as the bond of union, for they themselves recognize this and write of it to me. God be blessed! This story deserves to be recorded for posterity. But if it is possible I should be glad to know every circumstance of it in detail, for from certain things that have been written to me, it seems as if this man took the money to invest it for the benefit of our Sisters. I want to know the truth about this, and for what object it was confided to him. My Sister,

the Superior of the Faubourg, tells me that on Sunday evening when I had said adieu to her, M. de Lamoignon took fifty-four thousand francs of it to buy an office for his son. I am asking Sister to write to me about this matter, for you must not trouble to do so . . . .

We have visited our houses of Pont-Saint-Esprit, Avignon, Montpellier, Arles, Aix, and Marseilles, where certainly everything is blessed, and in all of which the observance is kept with great exactitude. It is most consoling to see on all sides how the Sisters love and esteem their vocation. All these houses have excellent Superiors. When at Aix we saw those of Digne, Draguignan, Grasse, and Forcalquier. The four are invaluable Mothers capable of putting their hands to anything in which divine Providence may employ them, and of rendering all manner of good service to God and the Institute.

We also met at Aix the Superiors of Sisteron, Apt, and Toulon, humble and virtuous souls, but not possessing the useful talents of the first four. In returning from Provence I stopped at our house of Crest, where I again found very good Sisters with a young Mother of thirty, but of a capable mind, judicious and zealous. She keeps straight to the grand road of the Rule, " for fear," she says, " of going astray." She gave me great satisfaction. Now I am at Valence, where it appears to me the

community is feeling somewhat the effects of having had young Superiors for eight years in succession; nevertheless they keep to the exterior observance and manifest an ardent desire to profit by our stay. I have not yet spoken with them, but I intend to do so. The Superior is good, gentle, capable, and willing, but is wanting in experience; this, please God, will come. These Sisters are in need of one who is firm and experienced. I hope, as next year will be that of their election, that God will look after them in this matter according to their needs.

Pardon my bad writing, but I forget half I wish to say. We went from Marseilles to Sainte-Baume, a place of great devotion.

Always your very humble, obedient, and obliged daughter, and servant in Our Lord.

CI.

To Mother Marie Agnes Le Roy, Superior of the Second Monastery of Paris.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

VALENCE, 1636.

MY WELL-BELOVED AND DEAREST DAUGHTER,

For this indeed you are to me in so peculiar and intimate a way that no dearer term can I add to it, and no other feeling than this loving one could my heart entertain towards you, seeing the way in which you look upon the true and solid lights and

affections of heart that God has given you. My daughter, I am quite enchanted with your letter.* I cannot keep myself from kissing it and pressing it to my heart, for every word of it from beginning to end has deeply moved me. I shall carefully treasure it. Nothing else have I to say, my true daughter, if not that you ought, in order fully and worthily to correspond with such graces, to keep your heart firmly set on God, and casting out all that is not He, jealously and faithfully preserve the rare treasure which the divine Goodness has confided to your hands. Spread the good odour all you can in the hearts of your daughters, and may everyone who comes in contact with you feel that the virtues of the crucified and despised Saviour go out from you. Recommend my heart with your own to Him and let them be as one in His divine love.

* This letter, which so charmed St. Jane Frances, contained an account of the intimate feelings of Mother Marie Agnes Le Roy, when she found herself under the calumny spoken of in the preceding letter to the Commander de Sillery. To quote from her letter: "It seems to me," she says, "that it is a particular grace to have been chosen to bear this humiliation. Our Lord is so good that He gives me very great pleasure and contentment in it, because it shows His special love for me, and seeing that it has all happened to imprint in my heart the spirit of lowliness and humility I am greatly consoled and incited to redouble my little efforts to procure Him glory. . . .

"Ah, my dear mother, how wise such occurrences make us, and what fruit they bear!" (History of the Foundation of the Second Monastery of Paris.)

CII.

To Sister Anne Louise de Marin de Saint Michel, Superior at Forcalquier.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
April 5th, 1637.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

May our most gentle Saviour in His goodness fill our souls with the merits of His holy Passion ! Alas ! my daughter, if you knew me such as I really am you would not desire many years of life for me in this valley of tears, but rather that God in His merciful goodness should soon take me to Himself. Still less should you think that sanctity was ripe in me, for truly all I can discover within my soul is very great poverty and misery. To speak quite in confidence to you and to you alone: it has pleased the divine Goodness to deprive me of all light and consolation, and to let me be overwhelmed with darkness and affliction. In a word, I am she for whom our good Mother has asked you to pray, and I beseech you to do it with all the compassionate affection and the loving charity which God has put into your heart for me. For indeed, dearest daughter, I am in sore need of your prayers; no other desire am I conscious of save that God may hold me in His blessed hands and so keep me from offending

Him. To do and suffer all, for and according to His good pleasure, is enough for me. I tell you all quite openly in order that you may speak of me to the *Heart* of our divine Saviour, whom I bless and thank for the graces that He continues to bestow upon you, with the growth of that intimate realization of His divine presence. Oh, how precious, how glorious is this grace! Yet this gift of His presence is not the same as His presence in the divine Sacrament, where His Sacred Body and Soul and Divinity all in the most real sense dwell with us, and remain with us in our miserable tabernacles until the species is consumed. Nevertheless in the gift of the presence of God this eternal Truth remains in us by essence, by power, and by grace, and to be conscious of this is an exceptional favour. You will understand this better by reading the books that treat of it. In the "Treatise of Divine Love" I think you will find it admirably explained. What I now tell you I have learnt there, or heard in sermons. Oh! what a happiness for a soul to possess her God in peace, and to be possessed entirely by Him! I am surprised that what I say contents you and gives you peace, but it is because our good God makes all things work to good for those who love Him.

Once again I beseech of you to recommend me to His divine mercy, and I pray that in you He may perfect His rare graces. All you have to do is to leave yourself in the hands of this heavenly Work-

man, and to be very faithful in paying no heed to what passes in you, but always keep the eye of your mind fixed on God. Of a truth I desire myself to be very attentive to this point, but my mind is so restless that I am not able to do so, and this is a constant trouble to me. See how I give you all my confidence. Will you not also tell me your thoughts, and it will be a consolation and a profit to me, if God so wills. May He bless you and all your Sisters to whose devout prayers I recommend myself. Those amongst us are most blessed who long for the holy perfection of their vocation. Divine Providence when it sees well will increase their number, neither will it fail to provide all things necessary for the maintenance of those who leave themselves in its care and only think of conforming to its good pleasure.

Believe me, always yours entirely in our Lord. May He be blessed.

Palm Sunday. On this day Holy Church bids us sing,

"The Saviour comes in the multitude of His mercies."

May our souls eternally praise Him. Amen.

CIII.

*To the Abbé de Vaux.**

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1637.

MY VERY DEAR AND VERY HON. BROTHER,

May the sacred love of our divine Saviour be our eternal life ! The little preface or pretended excuse in your letter is not quite in keeping with the simple confidence with which we have resolved to treat each other, which I believe God desires and ratifies, and with the profession you make of wishing to live in the entire simplicity and candour of the Visitation spirit, which one certainly cannot but see in you. I bless God for it with all my heart, and know not how to thank Him for His infinite Goodness in having given such a friend to our Congregation, and such a support to the new plant which Providence has set in the garden of the church of Angers. Now I say all this straight out from my heart; will you not receive it, then, in this wise, my very dear brother, and unite with me in praising God, for to Him we owe it all. He is the sole author of all good things, hence should all glory be referred to Him.

* Guy Lanier Abbé de Vaux not only put his own house at the disposal of the Sisters foundresses of the Visitation at Angers, but continued in after years to give them constant proofs of his paternal affection. He was one of the most virtuous ecclesiastics of the seventeenth century.

Your whole bearing with our Sisters is extremely pleasing to me. Sister Mary Euphrasia Turpin has a good heart, a fine intelligence, and loves the Rule, which I advise her closely to follow, above all in the guidance of her Novices. Will you not also give her this advice? You will find her pliant, open, and easy to convince.

We must let Mother Claire Madeleine de Pierre complete her three years,* and I hope by that time divine Providence will have provided a successor. It is a very serious matter in a new foundation when a superior is often ill, and cannot follow the common life. By seeking pretexts, without necessity, to dispense herself, however little, from the exercises, she does great harm to herself and her community. She who ought to be a model of good example to her Sisters. How miserable and dangerous is this false liberty. May God preserve us from it! What responsibility have not such superiors on their consciences, and what an account they will have to render, not only for their own faults but for those which have been committed in imitation of them, and for impeding their own perfection and that of those under their care. This is far-reaching, my dear brother, so speak of it occasionally, I beg of you. A true daughter of the Visitation is a great treasure—may God give us all the grace to become

* Each election in the Visitation Monasteries is for a period of three years.

such. You do not tell me if the Sisters are still in your house. How good you are to them! I pray God to reward you with the glorious gift of His eternal City. To Him you owe much for having given you the heart and the generous soul you possess, wherein there is but the one desire, to serve Him. Go forward, dear brother, forward, always advancing and increasing in the purity and perfection of divine love, and may God give you the grace faithfully to correspond to the great favours He bestows upon you. This is, I know, your great wish, and I seem to see our Blessed Father looking down upon you as one of His most cherished children. God knows how I esteem you in His sight. But alas! my own poverty and misery are beyond description. May God diminish them for the sake of His glory. I trust to His Goodness and to the prayers that are offered for my needs. . . .

There is no doubt that this difficulty of not being able to make considerations in prayer leads to a more simple form of prayer, and a soul thus led ought to adhere to this way to which God is undoubtedly calling her, however faint may be the call, and although the calm and facility of dwelling reverently before Him which it brings be but slight. Neither ought she to forsake it because of her indigent state nor because of her wanderings of mind, but remain patiently and tranquilly before Our Lord, not giving willing consent to distractions,

but when worried by them just say from time to time words of submission, abandonment, confidence, and love of the divine will, and give up discoursing with the understanding; indeed it is useless to split our heads trying to do so, for it will be of no avail. The great secret of prayer is to follow our attraction and to go to it in good faith.

A soul who wishes to live in the presence of God should be very faithful to the practice of virtue, to great purity of heart, and to an unconditional surrender of herself to the divine will. When she sees herself walking in this way she need fear nothing, but if she has great consolations and facilities in prayer without the practice of these virtues, she certainly ought to fear. Truly this manner of prayer has in its simplicity a wonderful power of leading souls to a total despoliation of themselves. Yet they usually enjoy neither relish nor sensible devotion.

Yours, etc.

CIV.

To a great Servant of God.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY,
December, 1637.

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER,

May Our Lord fill our souls with the consolations and with the merits of His most holy Nativity.

It is about a month since I received your letter of November 9th in which I read your true goodness and loving care of me in my never-ending trials. However, by the grace of God they are somewhat less acute than when I last wrote. At that time Our Lord had sent me a great sorrow in the death of the virtuous Mother (de Châtel), who is a serious loss to me. It seems as if God wishes to deprive me of all help both of nature and of grace. This our Blessed Father prophecied to me before I was a Religious. With all my heart I adore the most holy will of God, and the only good I desire is its complete fulfilment. May I have the grace never to resist it. If it is perfectly wrought out in me how happy I shall be. Pray for this, dearest Mother, I beg of you. Strange to say, when writing to you I can never altogether keep back my tears, though otherwise I rarely weep, unless perchance when I reflect upon those precious virtues* of which I feel

* The following extract from a letter of St. Francis to Mme. de Chantal, March 28th, 1612, tells us what these virtues were: he says, " But let us come to the interior trial which you write to me about. It is in reality a certain insensibility which deprives you of the enjoyment not only of consolations and inspirations but also of faith, hope, and charity. You have them all the time, and in a very good condition, but you do not enjoy them: in fact you are like an infant whose guardian takes away from him the administration of all his goods in such sort that, while in reality all is his, yet he handles and seems to possess no more than what he requires for living, and as St. Paul says in this, ' He differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord

deprived, and thoughts against them rise up within me that are like daggers to my heart. Yet I am conscious that these divine treasures exist, but where I know not, and it seems to me that I do at least desire them and would willingly suffer anything in order to have the enjoyment of them. My mind pictures untold delights for souls who possess them: were I to dwell on this thought I should be parched up with sorrow, because I care for nothing in comparison with them. Could I be so fortunate as to die for Holy Church, nay, even for the least article of our Faith, how happy I should be; for, thank God, there is no point that I doubt about, though it seems to me that I am destitute of all faith.

To tell you further, dearest Mother, shortly after my last letter to you it pleased the divine Goodness somewhat to relieve me of the great oppression and desolation from which I was then suffering, by giving me a sensible feeling of the divine presence. I have already told you that I have never been altogether without some slight and almost imperceptible feeling of the presence of God, by which in the midst of a storm of troubles and temptations my spirit never wholly loses its tranquility, and as long as I maintain myself in that presence my soul

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of all things.' In the same way, my dear daughter, God does not want you to have the management of your faith, your hope, or of your charity, nor to enjoy them except just to live, and to use them on occasions of pure necessity."

is calm notwithstanding the piteous struggle. When it first pleased our Lord to give me some relief in the terrible temptations under which I laboured for so many years after I made my Vow,* I received the grace of a simple consciousness of His presence at prayer, and remaining in it I used to surrender myself up to Him and become absorbed and at rest in Him. This favour has not been withdrawn from me, notwithstanding that by my infidelities I have often hindered it; yielding to apprehensions that I should be useless in this state, and, wanting to do something on my own part, I used to spoil all. I am still often subject to this same fear, not, however, when at prayer, but at other exercises; I am always wanting to make acts, or to do something, and yet I feel that by so doing I am taking myself from my centre—that this looking straight at God alone is the only remedy for me, the sole relief in all the troubles, temptations, and accidents of life. If I followed my attraction, I should certainly never seek any other

* On September 2nd, 1604, Saint Jane Frances made a vow of perpetual chastity and of obedience to St. Francis de Sales, from this time until her death she suffered from temptations against Faith in varying intensity. On Oct. 4th of this same year (1604), St. Francis wrote to her, "You ask a remedy for the temptations against faith which assail you. Never argue with them, but do as the children of Israel, who threw the bones of the Paschal Lamb into the fire without attempting to break them," and again: "Oh, my daughter, it is a good sign when the enemy urges so vehemently from without, it is a sign he is not within."

way than this, for when I think to fortify my soul by reflections and discourses, or by acts of resignation, for all of which I have to do violence to self, I only succeed in exposing myself to fresh troubles and temptations, and finding therein nought but dryness and dissatisfaction, I have perforce to return to this simple surrender to God. Apparently He wishes thus to show me that He desires on this subject a total cutting off of the activities and workings of my mind, so that His activity and not mine should undertake the care of all. Mayhap He requires this of me not only on the subject of Faith but on all others as well, for in every trouble and in every spiritual exercise to look at Him is all that He seems to want of me, and the more unwaveringly I do so the better I find myself, and the quicker my troubles pass. But the activity of my mind is such that I am always in need of comfort and encouragement. Alas! my dearest Father often spoke to me of this. Yet recalling the past, I see that my sufferings at that time were not the troubles I now endure. Then it was only my distracted prayers and such-like trifles that troubled and sometimes deceived me, for which I am not sorry, as there was no real danger; God was there, and I had only to keep myself steadfast to Him. But in my present trials I am as one always on the edge of a precipice.

Our late Mother (Péronne de Châtel) was an

immense help to me, for she taught me to walk with simplicity, firmly and fearlessly in the presence of God, and that sufficed for all. The more completely I am stript of all sentiment, all relish, all repose in God, the more do I seem to gain strength and peace of soul, and the more clearly do I see that there is nothing to lean upon but God alone, purely, and simply. One of our Sisters* is drawn by this absolute detachment to a degree that it is almost impossible to surpass, and our good Mother (de Châtel) told me that God gave this Sister to me as an example to follow. She wrote at the request of our late Mother an account of her interior state to which I have added in detail. She is a soul of great virtue and her detachment is marvellous. Speaking of this, some days ago, Our Lord gave me a light so vivid and set it before me in a manner so luminous that I saw without a shadow of doubt that I must no longer cast my eyes upon myself about anything whatsoever, nor even question my Beloved, but in all simplicity and repose become absorbed in Him. Now since this day of alleviation it seems to me that I have kept myself more continuously in God's presence, and I have but seldom had those violent temptations — only two or three times.

This is, I think, all that I can give myself time to say at present. If I have not expressed myself well

* Sister Anne Marie Rosset.

to this distinguished servant of God you will not fail to understand me and will tell me what he says.

Yours, etc.

CV.

To Mother Marie Aimée de Rabutin, Superior at Thonon.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY,
October 15th, 1639.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

May God be always blessed in all things and may He be particularly blessed for the good health you tell me you enjoy, and for the care you take to do all that is prescribed to keep you well. I am sending you a box of lozenges. Take them as directed besides the other remedies. I beg of you to take them regularly, for they are sweet, not unpleasant, and very inexpensive. Do not, I beseech of you, undertake any extra fasting nor abstain more than you can easily manage. Continue cheerfully to make use of the little alleviations that are settled for you, and any others that your weakness may require, just as you would see that others did. Drink your wine, at least half your portion, for your wine-cups are very small.* Neither rise earlier nor go to bed later than the others, nor undertake any laborious work, for I know your health would not

* These wine-cups held about two small glasses.

stand it. Take the discipline only on Fridays. Possess your spirit in peace and calm, and pass gently through this miserable life, not taking too much to heart the faults of your sisters, nor their little ways of worrying you. Do your best amongst them, and leave the rest to God. Pray, and get prayers, that it may please God to turn the miseries and calamities of this world to His glory and to the salvation of His people, and do not forget me. If you would like me to write to Sister J. Antoine I will do so. However, she must be kept to the promises she made to me—tell her that I have spoken to you about them and have asked you to let me know how she is going on. May God be your support. Blessed be He and His holy Mother. Amen.

CVI.

To St. Vincent de Paul at Paris.

On the Arrival of the Lazarist Fathers at Annecy.

Vive ✠ Jésus !

Annecy, 1640.

My very dear Father,

Praised be our divine Saviour who for His great glory and the salvation of many souls has brought your dear children happily here. Their coming is a subject of thanksgiving to Our Lord from everyone, but most of all from the Bishop of Geneva

and myself, to whom it is an unbounded consolation. We look upon them as our true brothers, with whom, in simple openheartedness and confidence we are as one, and they too feel this. I have had a conversation with them, and truly they speak as if they were daughters of the Visitation. All are full of goodness and candour. The third and the fifth need a little help to get out of themselves. I shall tell their Superior, M. Escarts, of it. He is a Saint, and a man truly equal to his charge. I have given them each a practice of virtue. With God's help, for our mutual consolation and to obey you, I will always lovingly continue so to do, for indeed, my dear Father, there is much to speak of to these dear souls. The good Father N. has manifested his own difficulties to me with the utmost simplicity. He has an upright heart and a good judgement, but it will be difficult for him to persevere. I have begged of him to put aside all thought of either leaving or staying, and to apply himself in good earnest to do God's work, leaving himself trustfully to His Providence. I wish he could settle down, as he is a soul of great promise. In fact they are all charming and have already given great edification in this town during the three or four days that they have been here. Their spirit is very like that of my dear and good Father.

CVII.

To Sister Claire-Marie-Françoise de Cusance at Gray.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1640.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Your letter fills me with tender compassion, but it also gives me very real comfort, seeing how joyfully God is enabling you to make your passage

* This religious belonged to the ancient family of the Counts of Berghen, Champlitte, and Belvoir. At the age of thirteen, upon the foundation of the Monastery of Champlitte, she was taken there and given the title of Foundress. Her arrival was the signal for a great ovation. Cannons boomed forth their welcome, while the Magistrates harangued, and the people cheered her, acclaiming the great and good deeds of her ancestors. In this wise did the child enter into her new life of poverty, obedience, and chastity. Soon after her entrance the war between France and Spain obliged the Community to leave Champlitte for the little town of Gray. Here fresh trials awaited it; the plague broke out, and so awful were its ravages that the town was soon a veritable sepulchre. Yet none of the terrors that surrounded her shook the resolution of the brave child. Full of confidence in God she remained calm and joyful in the midst of unheard-of privations.

The fame of her courage and her virtue went abroad and even before her profession she was the object of public veneration, for the people loved her and claimed her as their own heroine. At the age of sixteen, Sister Claire-Marie-Françoise de Cusance made her solemn vows and became the Saint Stanislaus Kostka of the Visitation. She died two years after her profession, having spent those eighteen

through this life to Him. You will love and adore Him in an eternity of glory, for this is the only good that is worth setting our hearts upon. Here we are all regretting your absence, and envying you your happiness, but our regret and our envy are more than balanced by our gratitude to God who is taking you so mercifully to Himself. Oh! how hard and long is this life for those who yearn to be with Him!

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years of life more like an angel than a woman, and having enjoyed many supernatural communications. No sooner was her death known, than the Mayor ordered all the bells of the town of Gray to be tolled, on which the inhabitants at once announced their intention of assisting at the obsequies with torch-lights to honour not so much her birth as her high virtue. The Visitation Monastery had not as yet a cemetery of their own, so the religious of the Annunciation, at their urgent request were given the holy remains, which for some days they exposed to public veneration. Numerous were the graces obtained during those days by the devout inhabitants through the mediation of the holy nun. Her portrait was circulated in Flanders where [like Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux in our day] she was venerated, though not yet on the Altars of the Church. Fourteen days after the obsequies had been celebrated a religious of the Annunciation wrote to the Mother Superior of the Visitation at Gray. "This dear deceased is still quite beautiful and her body quite flexible, the veins are to be seen in her person as in a living body, which proves to us that it was truly the temple of a pure and angelic soul. Several persons have noticed a fragrant perfume exhaling from the coffin, and others have received extraordinary graces and interior illumination when praying beside it." (Taken from Vol. IX. of the "Lives of the Sisters of the Visitation.")

You must do, my daughter, as your good Mother desires about your state of health.

Most earnestly do I beg of you to ask God that I may live and die in His grace and according to His good pleasure. Do not refuse me this favour, and when you see Him do not forget to speak to Him about me. Be kind to me in this.

I remain,

Yours affectionately in His love. Amen

CVIII.

To Sister Jeanne Benigne Gojos, Lay Sister at Turin.*

Vive ✠ Jésus !

ANNECY, 1640.

MY DAUGHTER MOST DEAR,

Your few words explaining your interior occupation have made your soul as clear to me as if it lay open before mine eyes. All that passes within you and without you is God's own work.

Regarding your interior life, my advice is: Give God a free hand to do as He likes, while you look on in loving simplicity. And as to the exterior:

* Sister Jeanne Benigne Gojos died at Turin, in the odour of sanctity, November 5th, 1692. Her life was written under the title of "The Charm of Divine Love," and it possesses all the beauty of true mysticism. It is hoped that one day she may be raised to the Altars of the Church. St. Jane Frances said of her: "From the day of her profession she seemed no longer to be on earth."

Practise virtue by making faithful use from moment to moment of the opportunities provided by divine Providence. But it is superfluous for me to offer advice, as the heart that is governed by God needs no other guidance. Beseech of Him in His goodness, my dear daughter, to accomplish in us His holy will, without let or hindrance on our part.

Yours, etc.

CIX.

To the Sister Louise-Angélique de la Fayette, at the First Monastery of Paris.*

Vive ✠ Jésus!

ANNECY, 1641.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,

Though not personally acquainted with you, none the less do I know and dearly love you. Your letter shows me quite clearly the state of your mind,

* Marie-Louise Motier de la Fayette became maid of honour to Anne of Austria at the age of fourteen. Her beauty and the promise of great ability for which she was afterwards so remarkable attracted the King Louis XIII. His devotion to her which lasted all his life was that of a brother to a most dear sister. He turned to her in his troubles and relied and acted on her advice. When at the age of nineteen she decided to retire into the Monastery of the Visitation, for which she had not ceased to long during her short life at Court, the King opposed her vocation, but seeing that her happiness was bound up with it he at last gave his consent. Yet he never ceased to visit this devoted friend who continued to exercise over him a wise and salutary influence. Richelieu, jealous of her power with

and the source of your trouble and embarrassment. It comes from your over-eagerness in seeking to arrive at the perfection you desire, instead of patiently and submissively awaiting the will of Him who alone can give it to you. Now if you wish truly to acquire the spirit of your vocation you will have to correct this fault, and carry out whatever instructions are given you, gently and faithfully, repressing your desires and your thoughts in order,

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the King, was sensibly relieved by her entrance into religion. However, hearing one day that Louis had spent three hours at the Rue St. Antoine with this young religious, he was thoroughly frightened, and sending for Père Caussin, the King's confessor, he said: "I am greatly astonished that the King has made such a mystery to me of this visit. It has caused a great sensation, and the public are persuaded that the consequences of it will be serious. My friends have come to offer to defend me at the peril of their lives." "What can you mean, Monseigneur?" replied the Jesuit Father. "Surely you do not fear Mademoiselle de la Fayette? she is but a child." "You are a simple man," replied the Cardinal, pressing the Priest's hand; "but you will have to learn the wickedness of the world. Know then that this child has had it in her mind to ruin all."

Notwithstanding the discontent—nay, even the abject terror—of the powerful Cardinal, Louis continued his visits, which always took place in the grilled parlour: for although as King he had a right to enter the monastery he never took advantage of this royal privilege.

Upon the foundation of the monastery of Chaillot, for which Henrietta Maria of England herself chose the house, Mlle. de la Fayette, now Sister Louise-Angélique, was sent as one of the foundresses, and was elected Superior there on the decease of Mother L'huillier. After the death of Louis

in God's good time, to become a true Visitation nun. I think, if I am not mistaken, that you are not content simply to make acts requisite for your training in perfection, but you want to feel and be conscious that you have made them. This satisfaction you should give up, and content yourself with saying to God without sensible feeling: "I wish with all my heart to perform such and such practices of virtue for Thy good pleasure." Then perform them

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XIII., Louis XIV., Charles II., and James II. of England, Anne of Austria, and Marie Thérèse, all continued to frequent the monastery in order to learn how to sanctify respectively their triumphs or their misfortunes. The unfortunate Queen Henrietta Maria took up her residence there. Mlle. D'Aumale, afterwards Queen of Poland, the Princess Louise Hollandine, daughter of Frederick V. of Bohemia (the champion of Protestanism in Germany) and granddaughter of James I. of England, were instructed by and lived with the nuns. Later, Marie Beatrice, widow of James II., lived at the monastery. Yet all this concourse of the great ones of the world did not tarnish the virtue nor dissipate the mind of that lover of solitude and of penance, Louise Angélique de la Fayette. She died as Superior at Chaillot, January 11th, 1665, loved and venerated by all who knew her. It is little known that the world owes the birth of Louis XIV. to the wise advice of this holy nun, who pressed home upon the King his conjugal duty.

Taken from, firstly, the original manuscript letter of Père Caussin, S. J., to Sister de la Fayette, found amongst her papers after her death; secondly, from the memoirs of Mme. de Motteville, a personal friend of Sister de la Fayette; thirdly, from the History of Louis XIII., by P. Griffet, who had recourse to the memoir of Père Caussin for these incidents.

although with dryness and wish for nothing better than in this manner lovingly to serve Him. If you do this you will soon find yourself in possession of that calm and holy peace so necessary to souls who desire to live by the spirit, and not according to their own views and inclinations. Your repose and spiritual advancement depend, I can see, on these things. May God fill you with Himself and give you the grace to practice all that is taught you by her to whose guidance He has committed you.

I am affectionately yours.

CX.

*To Madame the Duchess de Montmorency (née des Ursins).**

Vive ✠ Jésus!

MOULINS,
19*th June*, 1641.

MY VERY HONOURED AND VERY DEAR MADAME, AND BY DIVINE GRACE OUR TRUE AND BELOVED SISTER,

I bless and thank our good God for enabling you so courageously to show forth the power of His divine Love. Your entrance into Religion will be for His greater glory and for the happiness of our

* When becoming a postulant at the Visitation, the Duchess de Montmorency wished not only to renounce her titles of nobility, but also to change her baptismal name of Marie-Félice, a custom which was not usual at that time. She was named Marie after Marie de Medicis, and Félice

little Congregation. O my dearest Sister, My well beloved of God, with what overflowing consolation you have filled my soul! I have just received your letter, which has been a long time on the road, and I now write in haste not to lose the opportunity of this messenger who goes direct to Lyons, as I am anxious to tell you that I consider that in no way have I now either the strength or the capacity to undertake the superiorship of any of our monasteries.

The Bishop and our Sisters, the latter very unwillingly, have partly consented not to have me re-elected here. Still, I assure you if his Lordship gives me an obedience to go to you I do not think I could possibly have a command more to my liking, and I pray God if this is His will that He may inspire the Bishop to send me. It would be an immense consolation to me to give the veil to one so full of desire as you are to revive the true spirit of our Blessed Father. May our good God complete in you the high perfection which He has so gloriously begun.

I am most truly your poor humble and unworthy servant in Our Lord, etc.

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after her maternal uncle Félix Peretti (Pope Sixtus the Fifth). At her clothing she dropped these names and was from henceforth only known as Sister M. Henriette. She became Superior at Moulins some years after the death of St. Jane Frances.

CXI.

To a Novice.

Vive ✠ Jésus!

[*Undated.*]

My very good and dear Brother,

I have been absent for four weeks, and only yesterday on my return received your letter. It gave me, I assure you, very great consolation, and I am full of gratitude to the God of divine goodness for His mercies to you. The evil spirit cannot give this attraction you speak of; he draws us away from good. On the other hand, our loving Saviour sheds His perfume in our hearts, so that young souls may be drawn to follow Him by the sweetness of His odour.

Rejoice, then, in this grace with great humility, my dearest brother, and by means of it grow stronger in your vocation and in the practice of all virtue, above all in that of self-renunciation, so that you may advance in union of soul with God. Give yourself wholly into His hands. That done, have no fear of the evil spirit but of God alone, for, having quitted all things and yourself in your desire to belong to Him, Satan can do you no harm. Go forward quite simply, ruminating but little. The affection I feel for you, as a mother for her son,

draws from me these words of advice, but I know the best counsel is not wanting to you where you are. May God lead you Himself to the height of perfection to which He has called you, and always keep you within His holy hand. I never forget to ask this of His Goodness. Neither do you forget me when speaking to Him.

Believe me, I am, and always will be,

Your most affectionate, etc.

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